Chapter 23
The Public Bath (*Ḥammām*, pl., *ḥammāmāt*)[1]

The earliest European account of a public bath in South Arabia is, strangely enough, of one at Aden where one would have imagined the climate so hot as to make it hardly necessary.

> I must confess, that there are not to be seen of the kind, fairer Stoves and Baths than those of this Town [Aden];they are all lin'd with Marble, or Jasper, and cover'd with a fair Dome, through which the Light comes, which is adorn'd within side with Galleries, supported by magnificent Columns. All the Building is perfectly well divided into Chambers, Closets, and other vaulted Appartments, which all meet at the principal Hall of the Dome. 'Tis needless to give here a more particular Description, and to speak of what passes in these agreeable Places; 'tis much the same as is to be seen in the great Cities of *Turky;* of which the Accounts of the *Levant* make frequent mention.
>
> *De la Roque*[2]

Ritual ablution, simple reasons of cleanliness and comfort apart, is one of the basic requirements of Islam, for one cannot perform a valid prayer unless one is in a state of ritual purity. In the Yemen, more especially in the north, water is not always easy to obtain, and round Ṣan'ā' fuel is expensive. That well-water is drawn by human labour for the household, coupled with fuel problems, naturally does not encourage extensive washing of the person. Though of course in the highlands there is open-air bathing in running streams or pools, the cold months for an appreciable part of the year are not conducive to bathing. 'Cold is the enemy of religion, *al-Bard 'aduww al-dīn*,' runs a well-known proverb—because it renders one reluctant to perform the prerequisite ablution in cold water, and many is the time one has heard early morning ablutions accompanied by grunts and groans at the bitter cold of the water on one's limbs.

The heated indoor bath in northern Yemen is certainly a desirable luxury, to the extent that the Badawī proverb quoted by Nazīh[3] when discussing the public baths of Ṣan'ā', is most apposite—'*Na'īm al-dunyā fi 'l-ḥammām*, The (whole) delight of this world lies in the hot bath.'

There is a number of hot springs in the Yemen used as public baths—those at al-Sukhnah in the Tihāmah were favoured by Imām Aḥmad Ḥamīd al-Dīn, the warm baths of Ḥammām 'Alī are well known, and, for instance, in the Wādī Madhāb of the Baraṭ region, there is a *ḥammām* or hot spring where as many as twenty cars may sometimes be seen today, with bathers from Ṣa'dah or Khamir. There are probably many more but one does not know whether they had anything to do with the introduction of the fuel-heated *ḥammām*.

The question as to when the public hot bath, the *ḥammām*, was first introduced into the Yemen is not an easy one. According to Fraenkel, *ḥammām* itself is a loan word in Arabic from Aramaic, which, he maintains, derived it from the classical Thermae. In Ḥaḍramawt however the word *ḥammām* is used in the sense of a covered hall,[5] part of the mosque inside which the prayer is performed when it is cold, but it does not seem to have any direct connection—at least with *ḥammām* the bath. It is, of course, true that in winter water is heated at Ḥaḍramī mosques of the interior. There do not seem to have been *ḥammāms* in our technical sense at pre-Islamic Mecca and Medina—not only has the writer no recollection of any mention of them in early Islamic literature, but several Traditions (*Ḥadīth*) support the view that the Ḥijāzīs were not acquainted with them. Ibn Mājah[6] reports the following, 'The land of the Persians/foreigners (*al-A'ājim*) will be opened up to (conquered by) you and therein you will find houses called *ḥammāmāt*. Let not men enter them without a waist-wrapper (*izār*), and prohibit women from entering them (at all) unless sick or following parturition (*nufasā'*).' Then again,[7] Muḥammad forbade the *ḥammāmāt* to men and women, then permitted men to enter them in waist-wrappers (*mayāzir*) but did not extend permission to women. 'Ā'ishah, says yet another Tradition, was visited by certain women of al-Shām (Syria or simply the north) to whom she said, 'You are those whose women enter the baths.' The tenor of the injunction that follows is against a woman taking off her clothes except in her husband's house.[8]

It does not automatically follow, accepting the proposition that the *ḥammām* was not found in the pre-Islamic Hijaz, that it

1 The public baths are sometimes referred to by foreign visitors as 'steam baths' or 'Turkish baths'. Neither term is correct. The baths do not use steam, either for heating or for bathing inside the hot rooms. Nor were the baths introduced into the Yemen by the Turks—nor indeed were such baths developed by the Turks in Anatolia, having their origins, as they do, in a long evolution during the Byzantine era, from the hot baths of the ancient world. For these reasons the Ṣan'ā' baths are referred to here simply as 'public baths'. J. Sourdel-Thomine, *Encycl. Islam*, 2nd ed., art. *ḥammām*, says that already even in the 4th/10th century *ḥammāmāt Rūmiyyah*, Greek baths, are alluded to in Arabic literature.

2 *A voyage to Arabia Foelix*, London, 1732. For a public bath at Zabīd, at the end of the 8th/14th century, see Hikoichi Yajima, *Chronicle of the Rasūlid dynasty of Yemen*, Tokio, 1974, 57 and 61, called Dār al-Ḥammām.

3 *Riḥlah*, I, 150.

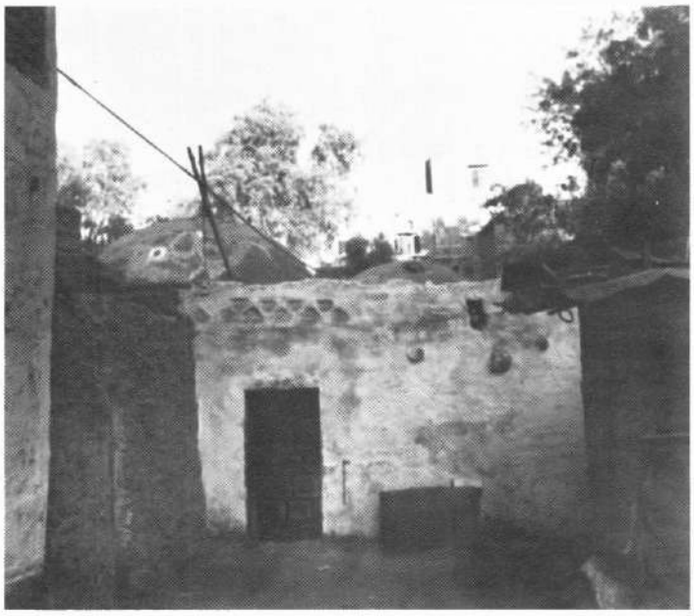
4 Cf. A. Grohmann, *Südarabien als Wirtschaftsgebiet*, Wien, 1917, I, 13, 187. The south Arabian coast has also hot springs as in Wāḥidī territory, and in Ḥaḍramawt at Tabālah and al-Ḥāmī.

5 Cf. R. B. Serjeant, 'Miḥrāb', *BSOAS*, London, 1959, XXII, 444.

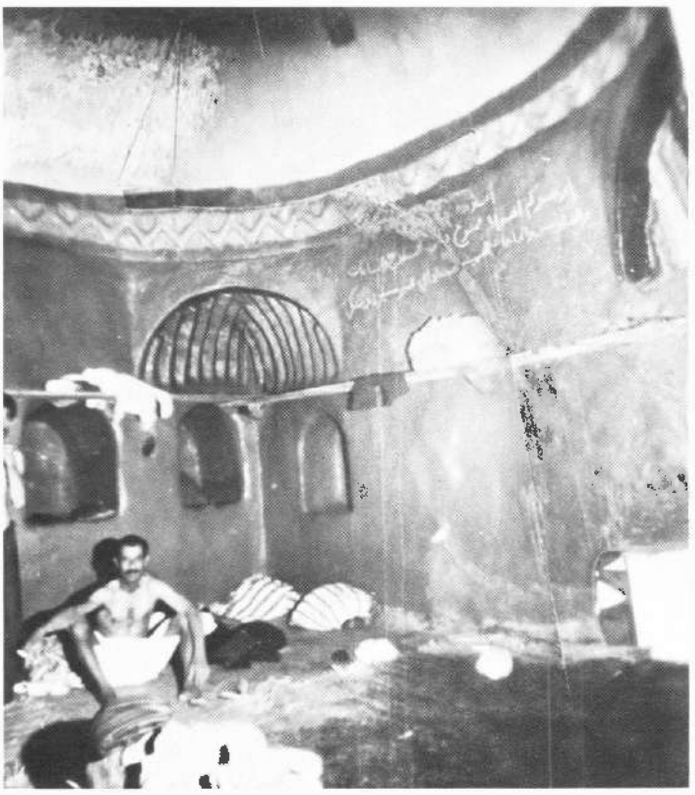
6 *Sunan*, ed. Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqi, Cairo, n.d., II, 1233; a similar Tradition is in Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, section on the *ḥammām*.

7 Ibid, 1234.

8 Al-Tirmidhī in section *Adab*, 43. Al-Tirmidhī, section *Ṣalāt*, 119, reports also, 'The earth, all of it is a place of prostration (*masjid* = mosque) except the *ḥammām*. There is a Tradition with a counter-Tradition about the lawfulness of the recitation of the Qur'ān in the *ḥammām*, and one against praying in the *ḥammām*, etc.



23.1 Ḥammām Yāsir. The facade containing the entrance door, approached down the narrow lane.



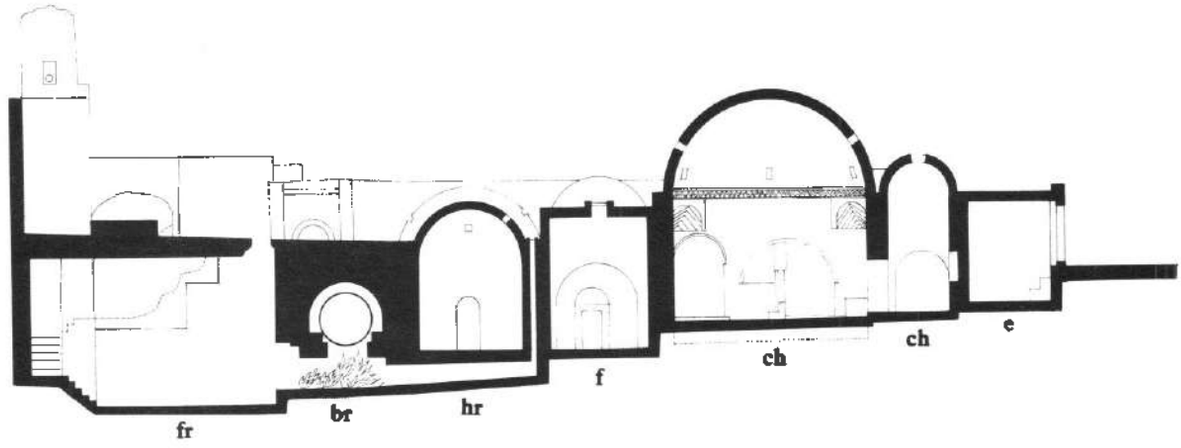
23.3 Ḥammām Yāsir. View of the changing room.

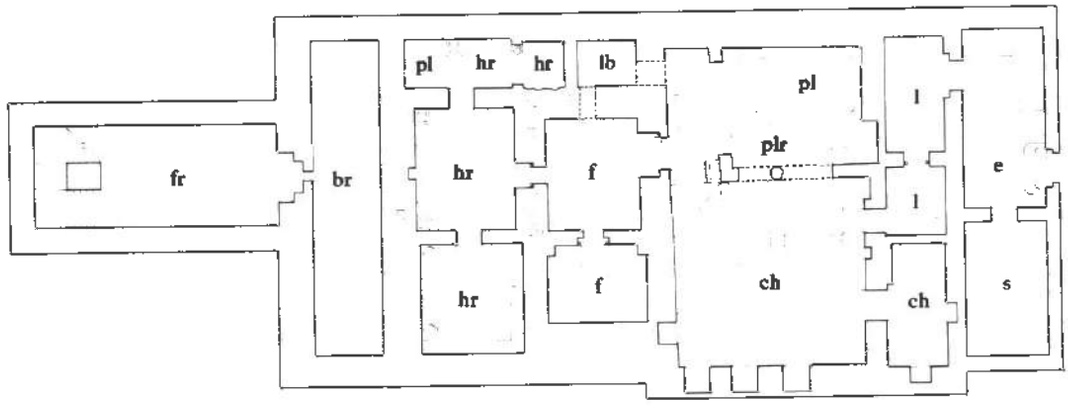
23.2 Ḥammām Yāsir. Interior of the changing room. The domed ceiling is supported on double squinch arches.

23.4 Ḥammām Yāsir. View of the changing room. Note the palm leaf matting on the floor.

Key to all figures

a animal stalls
b bathroom
br boiler
c court
cu court upper level
ch changing room
d *dīwān*
e entrance hall
eu entrance hall upper level
f warm room
fr furnace room
g grinding mills
gh *ghayl*—water level
h excrement room
hr hot room
j grain and fruit store
k kitchen
l lobby
lt laundry terrace
lb lavatory/bathroom
m *mafraj*
mn minaret
n *miḥrāb*
nw washing floor
o loading and mounting animals
or restaurant/eating place
p passage
pl pool
plr cold pool room
q public ablution area
r room—general use and sleeping
rr reception room and business
rl library
s store
sh sheep pens
sp shop
t terrace
tm tomb
tr treasury
u shaft
v rain water cistern
vm man in charge
w well
wb water cooling box
wr well ramp
x *minbar*
y women's room and wardrobe
z *manẓar*





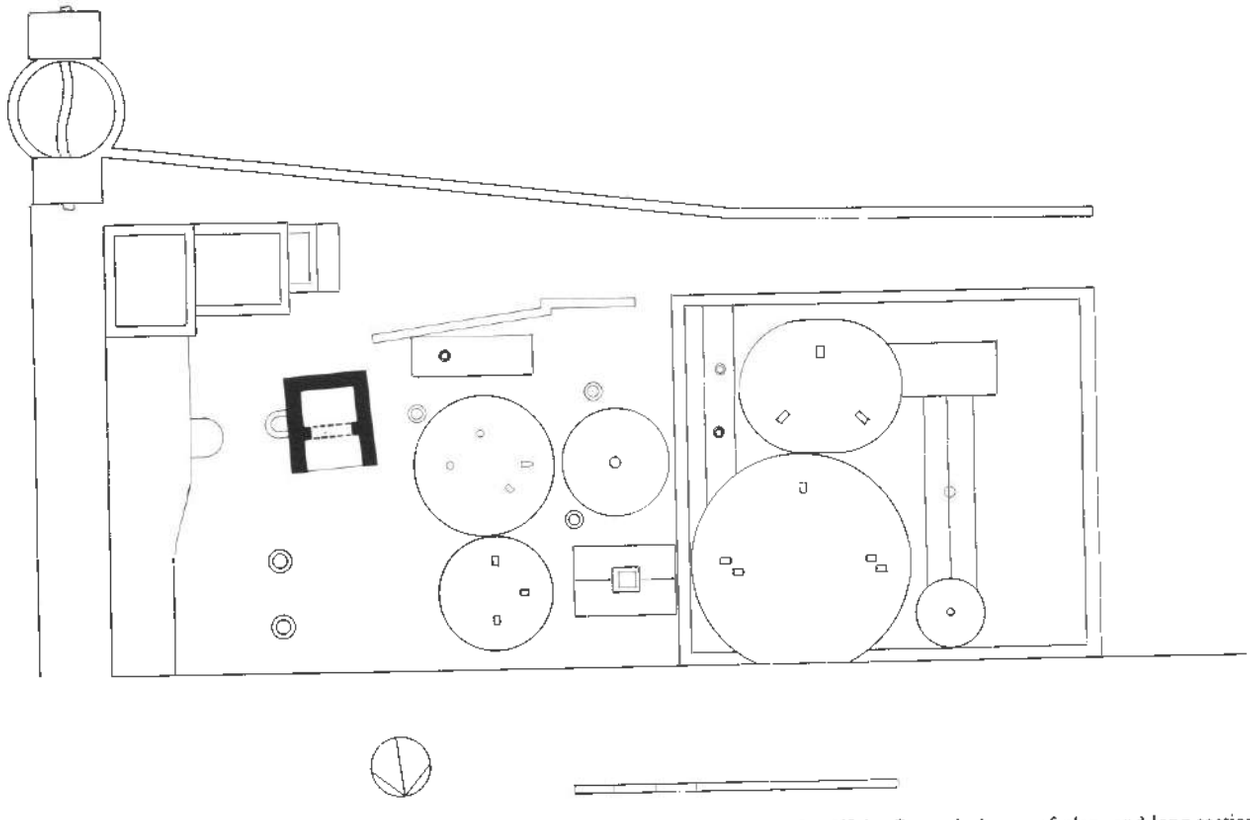


Fig. 23.1 Ḥammām Yāsir. Ground plan, roof plan, and long section through the building.

was also unknown in the highly civilized Yemen. The Persian Abnā' who, we know, controlled the Qaṭī' district of Ṣan'ā' before Islam, could have introduced it there, but there is no evidence that in any way suggests this in the literary sources at our disposal. For the present it is safest to assume that the *ḥammām* was introduced after Islam, but it can be postulated that this took place possibly even in the Umayyad period. In this connection it is interesting to learn that in Baṣrah in the early days of the Umayyads, the Governor, the redoubtable Ziyād b. Abī-hi 'used to prohibit *ḥammāmāt* except in the places where they would cause detriment to no-one.'[9] His regulation, one imagines, is taking into account such factors as smell, smoke and drainage, not moral issues. One would expect the introduction of *ḥammāmāt* to Ṣan'ā' when Quṣayr 'Amrah and the Khirbat al-Mafjar baths had been constructed, even if the actual style or architecture might be different.

The very fact that the first Zaydī Imām, al-Hādī, is credited with pronouncements about bath-keepers in his *fiqh* implies that public baths were already in existence before 900 A.D. in the Yemen. Al-Rāzī[10] records that in 353/964 there were 13 public baths in Ṣan'ā', and in 381/991, 106 mosques and 12 public baths. That the *ḥammāms* al-Rāzī speaks of were the hot baths and not mere bathing places is evident in that he says, 'A man enters the *ḥammām* and stays there an hour until his sweat commences, then he (goes on) sweating.'

Whatever theoretical objections or prejudices there may have been about *ḥammāms* in the very early days of Islamic expansion the bath very quickly became associated with the mosque, no doubt because of its value as a place of ablution before prayer. This can already be seen in the account of Baghdad by Ibn al-Jawzī[11] (late 6th/12th century) and one finds this in the main towns of the Yemen, as for example Radā', where 'Āmir b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb built his beautiful mosque, and at the same time constructed a public bath close beside it.

The manuals of *ḥisbah,* market and town regulations deal also with the public bath, and these remain constant over the centuries so that the regulations of *Qānūn Ṣan'ā'* hardly differ in any respect from those of the third century Imām, Uṭrūsh.[12]

The great Islamic theologian al-Ghazālī[13] (11th-12th century A.D.) epitomizes the 'Manners of the Bath' as 'covering the privy parts and lowering the eyes to avoid looking at the privy turning to look (at others) and withholding greeting, sitting about little, washing after sexual intercourse (*janābah*) before entering, and washing the feet with water before going out for this puts headache away'. There was even a Yemeni book on the bath composed by Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥaymī (flor. 1073-1151/1662-1738), *Ḥadā'iq al-nammām fi-mā jā'a fi 'l-ḥammām,*[14] though whether copies are still extant is unknown to us, most likely a book on rules of conduct.

Lest all these precepts convey too serious an impression, it must be said that the bath is centre of social intercourse and relaxation as the eye-witness accounts below will show. The poet al-Khafanjī (mid 12th/18th century)[15] in the dialogue (*muḥāwarah*) between the rival villages of Bīr al-'Azab and al-Rawḍah, has Bīr al-'Azab boast of possessing a *ḥammām* (which today al-Rawḍah also has), and, among others, two celebrated verses were composed by a poet and official of the latter part of the 11th/17th century on being met by a friend who asked him why he had gone to the bath,

I entered not the bath on pleasure bound.
How so—when passion's fire consumes my frame?
Mere flowing tears sufficing not I found,
I entered that each limb might weep the same!

Some wealthy Ṣan'ānī families and at least one inn (Samsarat-al-Muzayyin, see p. 290b) had at one time private *ḥammāms*, but the expense of their maintenance, necessitating, as it did, the residence in the household of a member of a bath-keeper family (*ḥammāmī*), meant that the number of private *ḥammāmāt* was severely limited.

There are seventeen public baths in Ṣan'ā' today, one of them in the 'Urḍī, the 19th century Turkish Barracks.

List of the Baths of Ṣan'ā'

Ḥammām al-Sulṭān

Situated west of Masjid al-Taqwā[16] on the west side of Bustān al-Sulṭān Quarter. Sultan Ṭughtakīn b. Ayyūb constructed Ḥammām al-Sulṭān at the time when he laid out (*ikhtaṭṭ*) the Quarter called Bustān al-Sulṭān west of al-Sā'ilah which at that date formed the furthest west boundary of Ṣan'ā' town. This Quarter he laid out as a place of residence for himself, his family, ministers and men of state, building many palaces (*quṣūr*), mosques and baths in it, and extending Ghayl Ālāf to it. These palaces flourished until the Amīr Yaḥyā b. Ḥamzah, brother of the Imām 'Abdullāh b. Ḥamzah entered Ṣan'ā' and destroyed the Sultan's palaces, removing their doors, windows and timbers to Ẓafār al-Ẓāhir (Ẓafār of Dhī Bīn). The last known restoration of this bath was in the period of the Imām al-Mahdī 'Abdullāh b. Aḥmad (ob. 1251/1835-6) who ordered it to be restored, but it continued to preserve its older name.

Ḥammām al-Ṭawāshī

Situated east of the road leading from Sūq 'Aqīl to Bāb Shu'ūb. Al-Ṭawāshī, the envoy whom the Sultan of India sent with a large present to the Pasha Muḥammad, a Turkish governor of the Yemen, stayed some time in Ṣan'ā' and constructed Ḥammām al-Ṭawāshī in the 10th/16th century, assigning the revenue it produced as a *waqf* or pious foundation to the Ṭawāshī Mosque

9 Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf,* ed. M. Schloessinger and M. J. Kister, Jerusalem, 1971, IVa, 193.

10 *Tārīkh,* 114-5, 95.

11 *Manāqib Baghdād,* Baghdad, 1342 A.H., 24, providing also statistics on the number of baths in Baghdad. For this and some other references see M. 'Abdul Jabbār Beg, 'Workers in the Ḥammāmāt in the Arab Orient in the early Middle Ages', *Revista degli Studi Orientali*, Roma, 1973, XLVII, 77-80. Cf. E. Bosworth, *The medieval Islamic underworld*, Leiden, 1976, 198, 300, passim, Abū Dulaf and Ṣafiyy al-Dīn al-Ḥillī and their descriptions of rogues and vagabonds. In the cold weather the beggars called Sāsānīs seek to sleep by the stokeholes of the bath furnaces.

12 *Qānūn Ṣan'ā'*, section 49, ii. Cf. Serjeant, 'An early Zaidī manual of ḥisbah', 27.

13 *Al-Adab fi 'l-Dīn*, Cairo, n.d. (1935 ?), 9.

14 *Nashr al-'arf,* I, 252.

15 Ibid, I, 298; cf. ibid, II, 47, and I, 113, for another poem on the bath. The 4th/10th century Baghdad anthologist Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī, *Diwān al-ma'ānī,* Cairo, 1352 H., II, 240 seq., has a section on *Faḍl al-ḥammām,* and one on *Dhamm al-ḥammām.* You see that its walls have fountains, and its sky has many moons (*kathirat al-aqmār*)—these last doubtless the small glazed circles in domes, to admit light; battle scenes with knights decorate the walls. Animal scenes have lions of war over smaller animals (*amhār*) and over Mahrī camels (*mahārī*). There are

Wa-yanābi'-un ka-quḍbāni durr-in
Tatakāfa min warā'i 'l-jidārī
Fountains like branches of pearls
inclining to each other beyond the wall

Another verse says the bath is

Manzil-un takhla'u dīna-ka fi-hī
Ḥina ta'ti-hi khali'a 'l-izārī

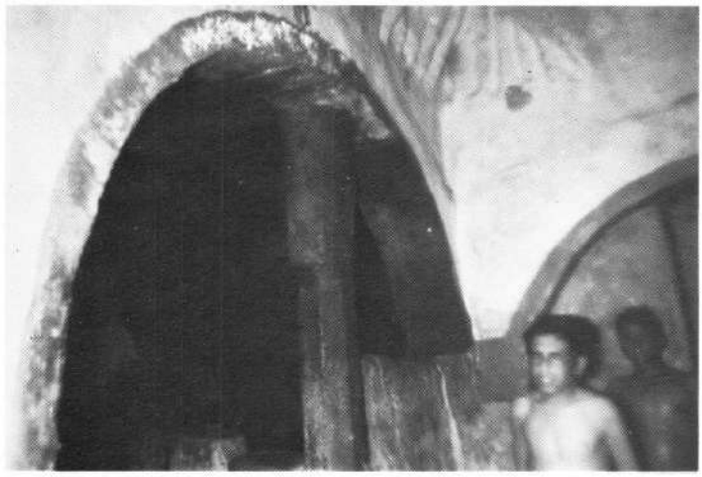
A place in which you take off your religion
When you come to it having taken off the *izār.*

A proverb in the collection of al-Maydānī, ed. Freytag, Bonn, 1838-43, III, 330, runs *'Man lā ya'rifu 'l-banā'a* (sic) *yata'jjabu 'alā qubbati 'l-ḥammām,* He who knows nothing of building marvels at the dome of the Bath.'

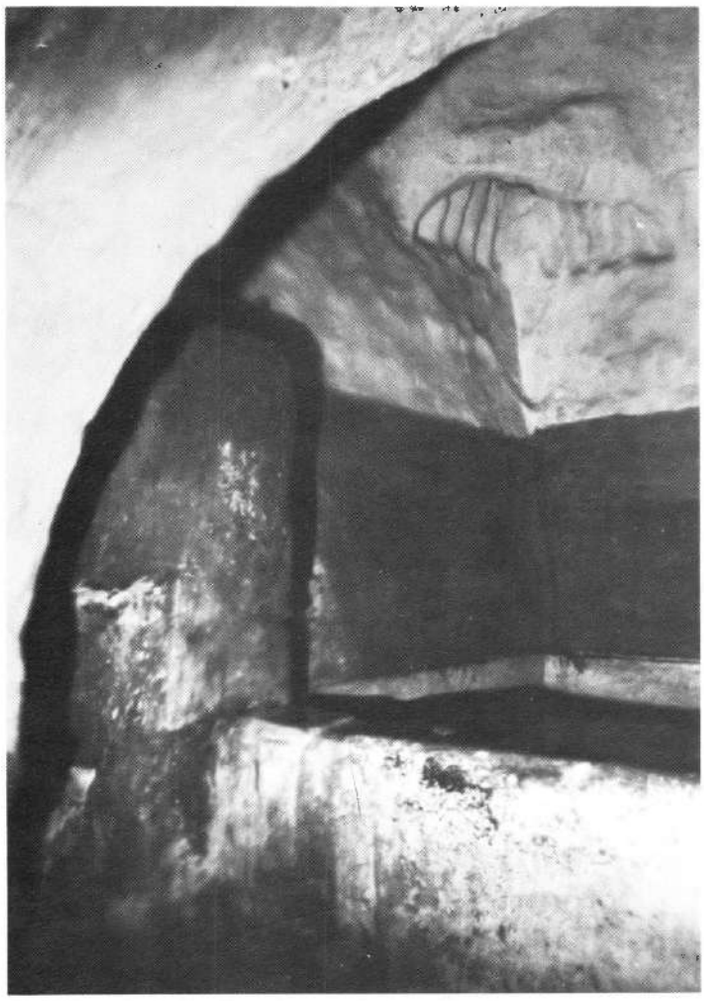
An amusing verse is quoted in Abū Tammām's *Ḥamāsah* (with comment. of Tibrīzī, II, 172) compiled in the first half of the 3rd/9th century, of a Badawī who said to one of his sons when the boy entered the *ḥammām* and the lime (*nūrah*) he had used, burned him.

I forbade the two of you to (use) lime and it burned you both.
Often an evil bath there is, the water of which scalds!

16 *Masājid Ṣan'ā',* 22. The mosque was constructed in 1176/1762-3, but we have no information as to whether the mosque and bath were in any way associated.



23.5 Ḥammām Yāsir. Interior of the cold pool room.



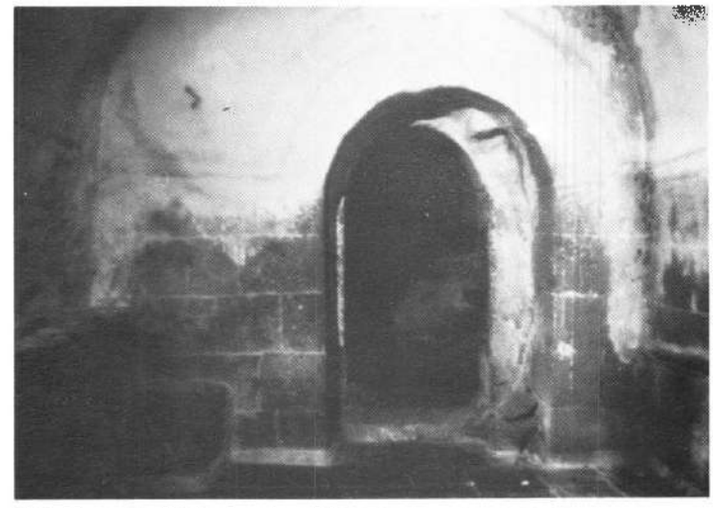
23.6 Ḥammām Yāsir. View of the pool in the cold pool room.

which he also constructed. Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn supplies information on this in *Anbā' al-zaman* under the events of 1028/1618-19.[17]

Ḥammām al-Mutawakkil

Situated at Bāb al-Ṣabāḥ, north of the Dome (Qubbah) of Al-Mutawakkil on the course of al-Ghayl al-Aswad. It was built by the Imām al-Mutawakkil al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥusayn (1128-39/1716-27) and restored by al-Mahdī 'Abdullāh b. Aḥmad (1231-51/1816-35).

23.7 Ḥammām Yāsir. Interior of the central temperate room.



23.8 Ḥammām Shukr. Interior of the western temperate room.

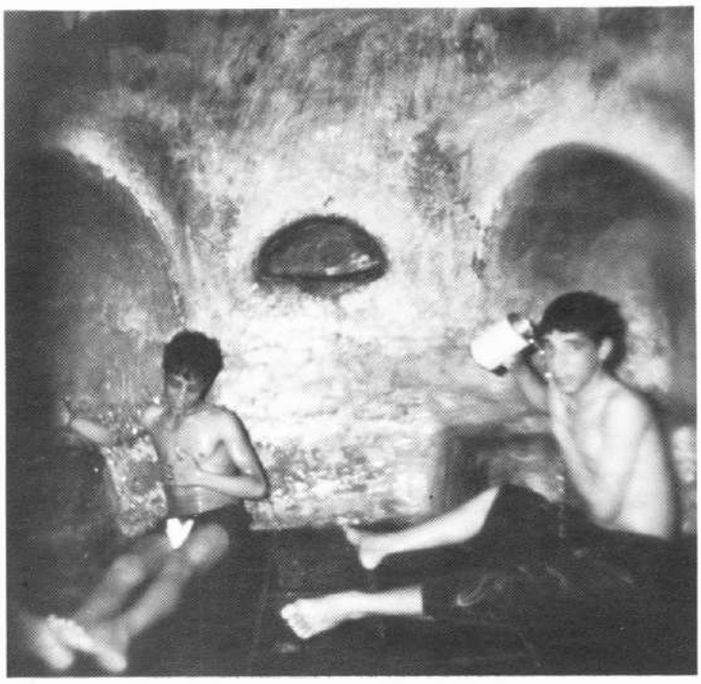
Ḥammām al-'Urḍī (The Barracks Bath)

Inside the Barracks, situated to the south of the lower 'Urḍī. Field-marshal 'Abdullāh Pasha of the Ottoman Army constructed it during the second Ottoman occupation.

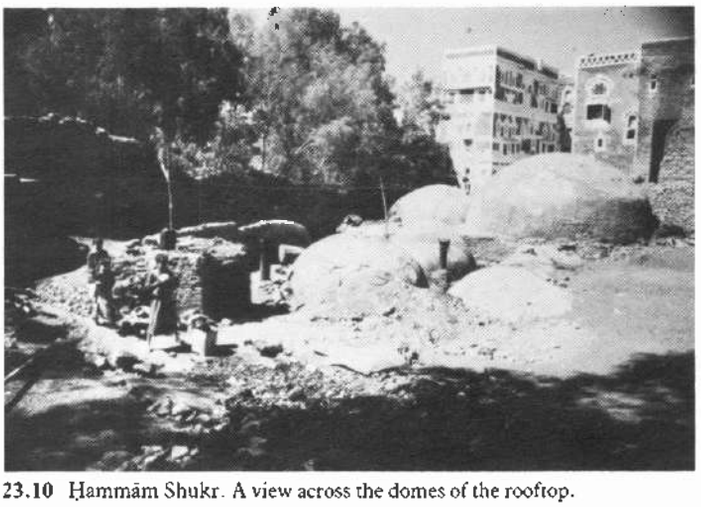
Ḥammām al-Hamdānī

Situated on the eastern edges of al-Bawniyah district. It was founded by the shaykh 'Alī Yaḥyā al-Hamdānī who had been in the Sudan and was one of the rich merchants of Ṣan'ā', in business in a big way. Built in the vicinity of his own dwelling some forty years ago, it was first private, restricted to him, his family and guests, but after their financial affairs deteriorated his heirs leased it out to become a public bath, and it is now known as al-Na'īm.

17 Cf. *Masājid Ṣan'ā'*, 69; *Ghāyat al-amānī*, II, 813.

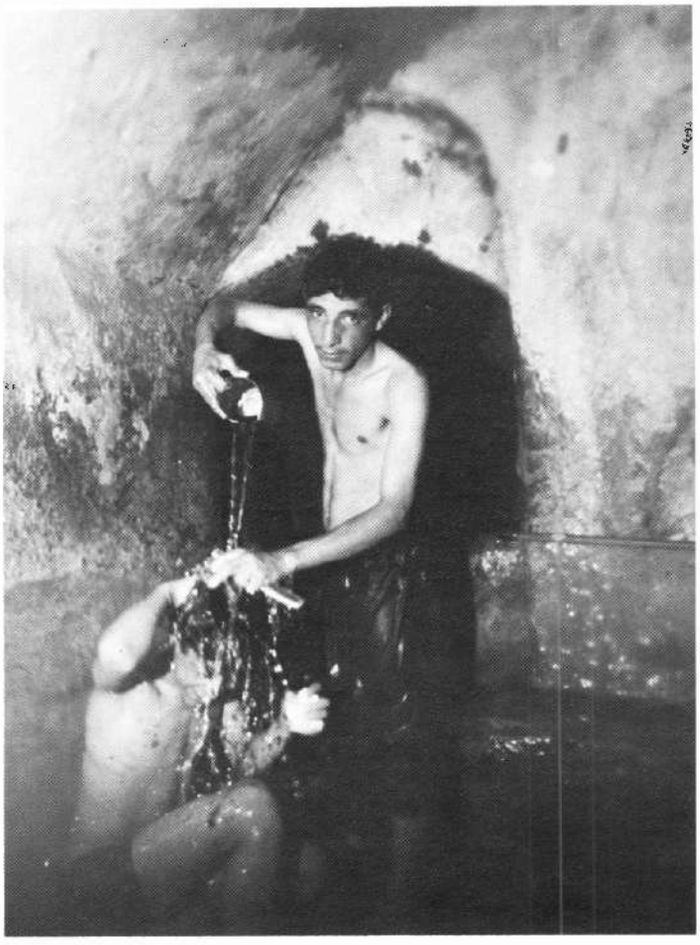


23.9 Ḥammām Shukr. Interior of the side hot room which is used for exercising.



23.10 Ḥammām Shukr. A view across the domes of the rooftop.

23.11 Ḥammām Shukr. Another view of the bath above roof level.



23.12 Ḥammām Shukr. Interior of the side hot room which is kept dark.

Ḥammām 'Alī

Situated west of Masjid al-Qāḍī. The Amīr 'Alī son of the Imām Yaḥyā Ḥamīd al-Dīn constructed Ḥammām 'Alī about twenty years ago, it being at the present time the best-known of the baths for cleanliness, fashion, elegance and health.

Ḥammām al-Abhar

Situated north west of Bāb al-Yaman.

Ḥammām al-Bawniyah

Situated in al-Bawniyah, one of the Quarters of Bīr al-'Azab, north of the road leading from Bāb al-Ṣabāḥ eastwards to al-Ṣulbī[18] (known since 1962 as Maydān al-'Ulufī, called after an officer who attempted to assassinate Imām Aḥmad in the Hodeidah Hospital in 1961). Al-Khafanjī[19] (mid 12th/18th century), as seen above, speaks of the wells, *ḥammām, samsarah* and sūq of al-Bawniyah.

18 A *ṣulbī* is a piece of hard open ground.
19 Cf. *al-Ṭarā'if al-mukhtārah min shi'r al-Khafanjī wa-'l-Qārah,* ed. Aḥmad Ḥusayn Sharaf al-Dīn, Cairo ?, 1970, 75 ff.

23.13 Ḥammām Shukr. The characteristic appearance of a public bath building externally.

Ḥammām al-Jilā'[20]

Situated in the north west corner of the old city to the east of the Sā'ilah. It is said to be one of the baths constructed before the 10th/16th century, and it was private to the Jews when they used to live in Ṣan'ā' town. When the Imām al-Mahdī Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan, known as Sayl al-Layl,[21] ordered them to be removed from this Quarter in 1086/1675-6 to a Quarter restricted to them exclusively within which he permitted them to construct residences for themselves, making gates for the Quarter in the wall surrounding it, Ḥammām al-Jilā' became restricted to the Muslims. The construction of the present bath is thought to be only two hundred years old.

Ḥammām al-Ḥumaydī

Situated east of the road leading from Bāb al-Yaman to al-Naẓārah Street. Al-Ḥajarī[22] suggests that the Ḥammām and the Ḥumaydī mosque were set up by the ancestor of Bayt al-Ḥumaydī, a family still living in Ṣan'ā'. The *ḥammām,* the mosque, and two other mosques, al-Madhhab and Janāḥ, all use the same well which has a *sabīl* at it.

Ḥammām Saba'

Situated to the north west of al-Jāmi' al-Kabīr, the Great Mosque in Ḥāfat Ṭalḥah.[23] It is also called Ḥammām al-Qū'ah.[24] Qāḍī Ismā'īl suggests that the name may imply that the bath was originally founded before Islam.

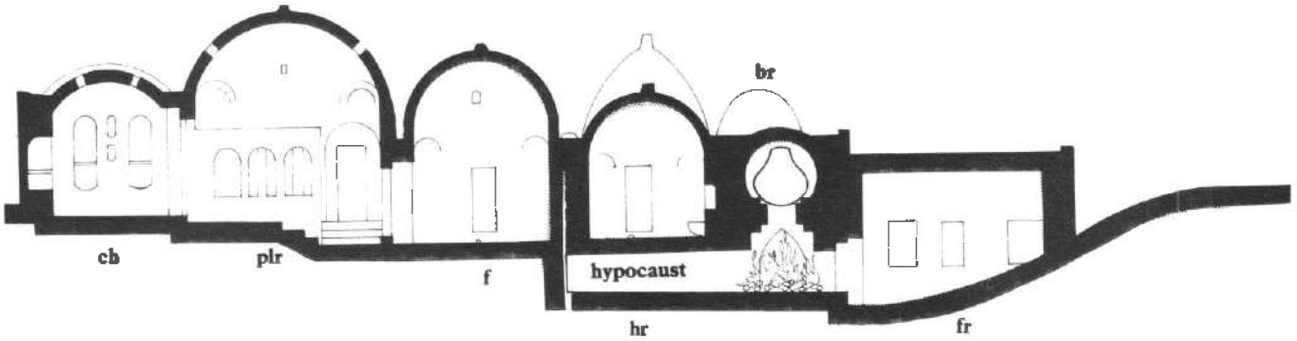
Ḥammām al-Sūq/Sūq al-Baqar

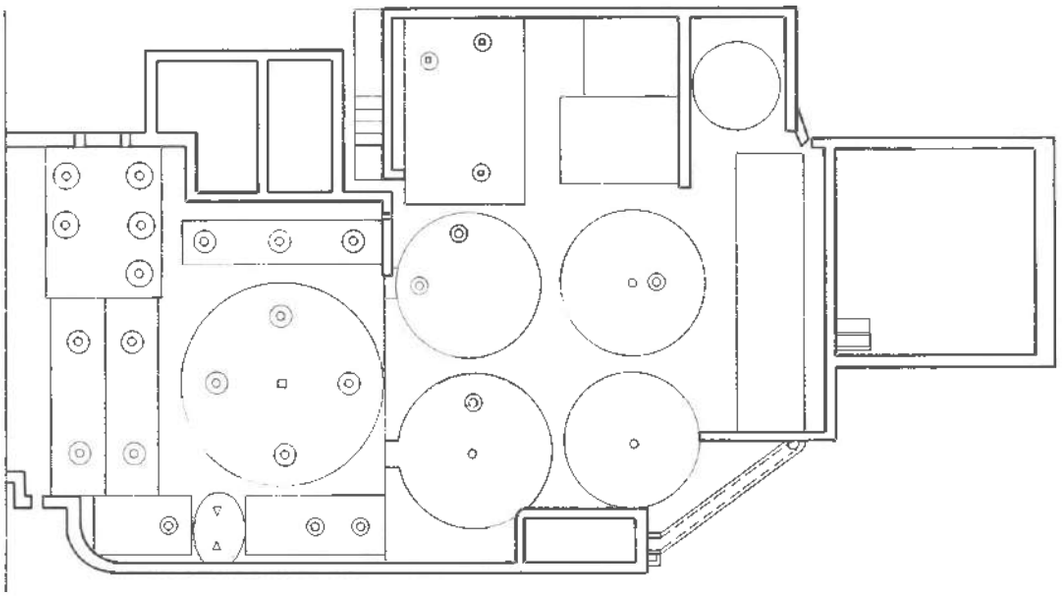
Situated in the Cattle Market (Sūq al-Baqar) to the south of Masjid al-Filayḥī and east of Masjid Dāwūd in the area which, in olden time, used to be known as Darb[25] al-Sirār, one of the two Quarters in early Islamic Ṣan'ā'.[26]

Ḥammām Shukr

Situated east of the Sā'ilah on the road from the Dome (Qubbah) of al-Mahdī 'Abbās to Ṣan'ā', passing by Masjid al-Ṭāwūs. It seems to have already existed in 977/1569. The Bayt Shukr is a Ṣan'ānī family, mentioned in the *Miswaddat Sinān,*[27] after which Ḥammām Shukr receives its name.[28] There is a local tradition that it was at one time a Jewish bath.

20 Jilā, says Qāḍī Ismā'īl, is pronounced with the modification of the vowel of the *jīm, i* instead of *a,* as is customary in Ṣan'ā' dialect.
21 His biography is given in *al-Badr al-ṭāli'*, I, 43, etc. He was known as Sayl al-Layl because of the sudden overwhelming nature of his attack in the campaigns he waged, like a flood coming down in the night.
22 *Masājid Ṣan'ā',* 48-9.
23 Ibid, 115, 140, the latter speaking of Ḥāfat Ḥammām Saba'.
24 Qū'ah (pl., *quwā'*) are large soak-away drains and pits for the water of the baths, open to the sky. Houses have smaller *quwā',* but they are roofed over (*masqūfah*).
25 *Darb* is an area, quarter, but can also mean a wall, etc.
26 *Masājid Ṣan'ā',* 95, speaking of Masjid Maḥmūd in Sūq al-Baqar (the *waqf* of which goes back to 744/1343-4), says that when the water of Bīr Maḥmūd which served both the mosque and the *ḥammām* in its vicinity diminished Imām Yaḥyā bought the house at the foot of the well-ramp (*sifāl al-mirna'*), adding to the length of the ramp and having the well dug till the water increased.
27 See p. 153a
28 Ibid, 92.





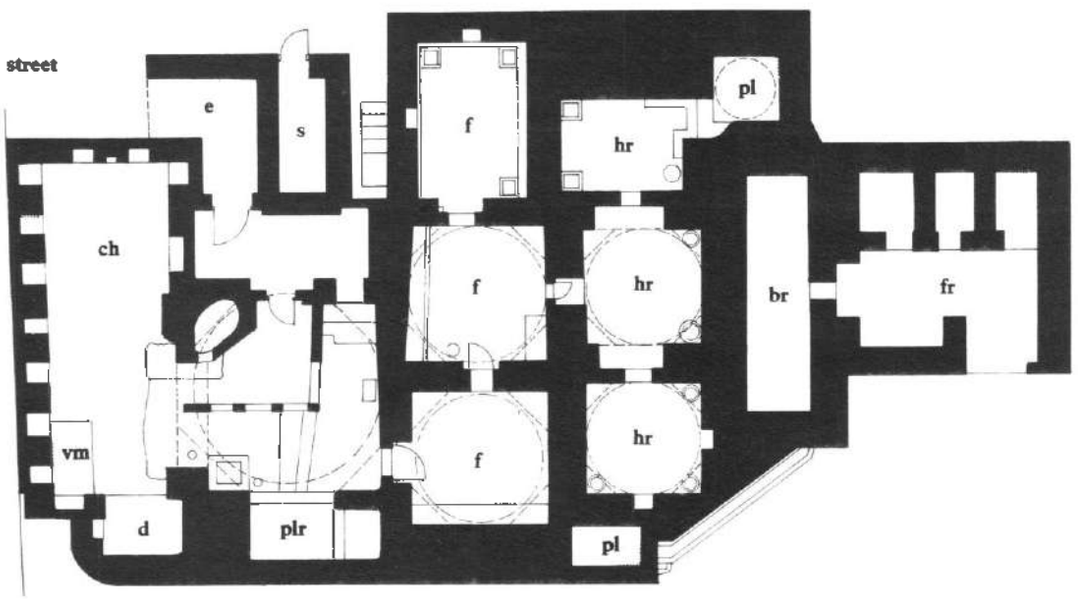
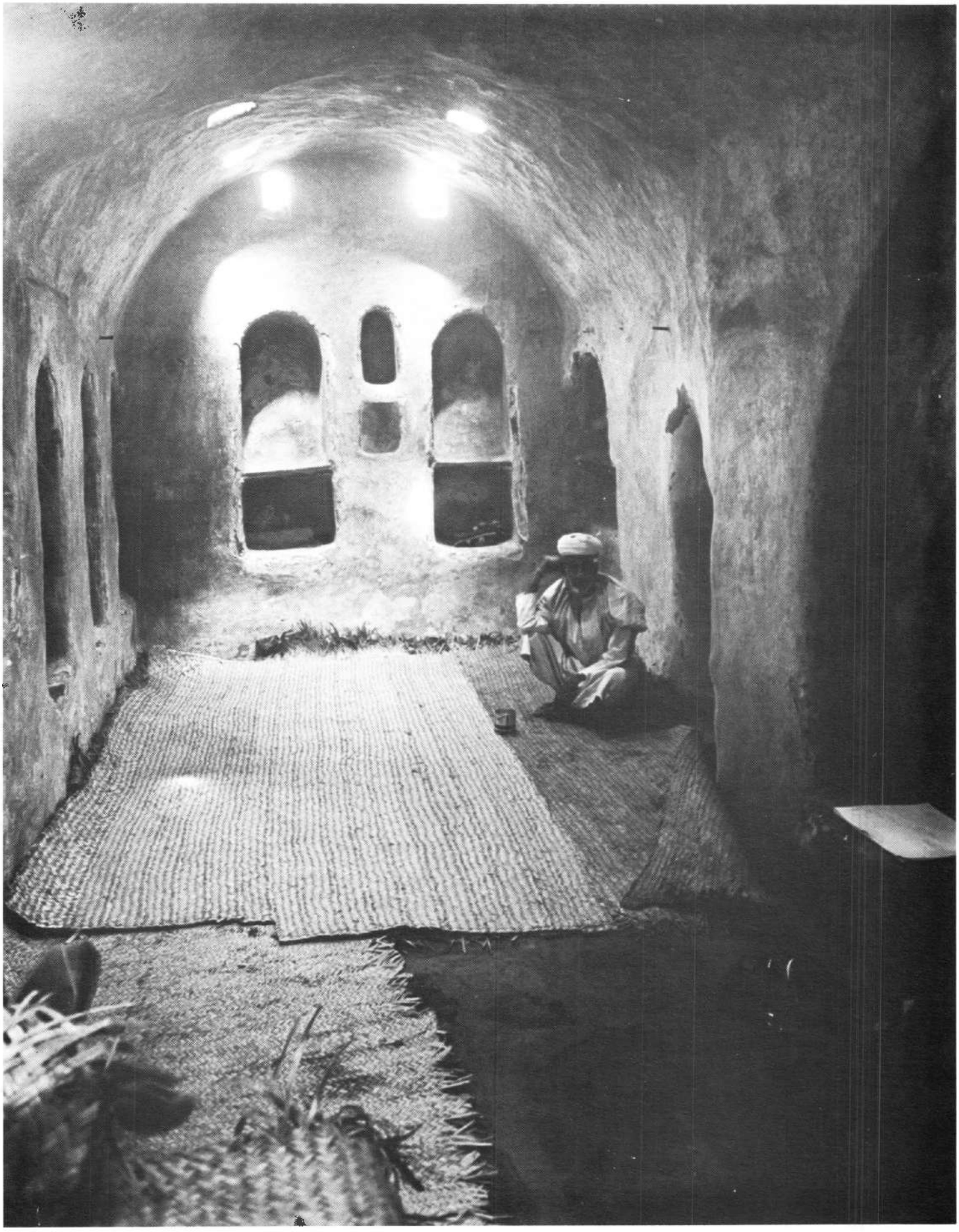
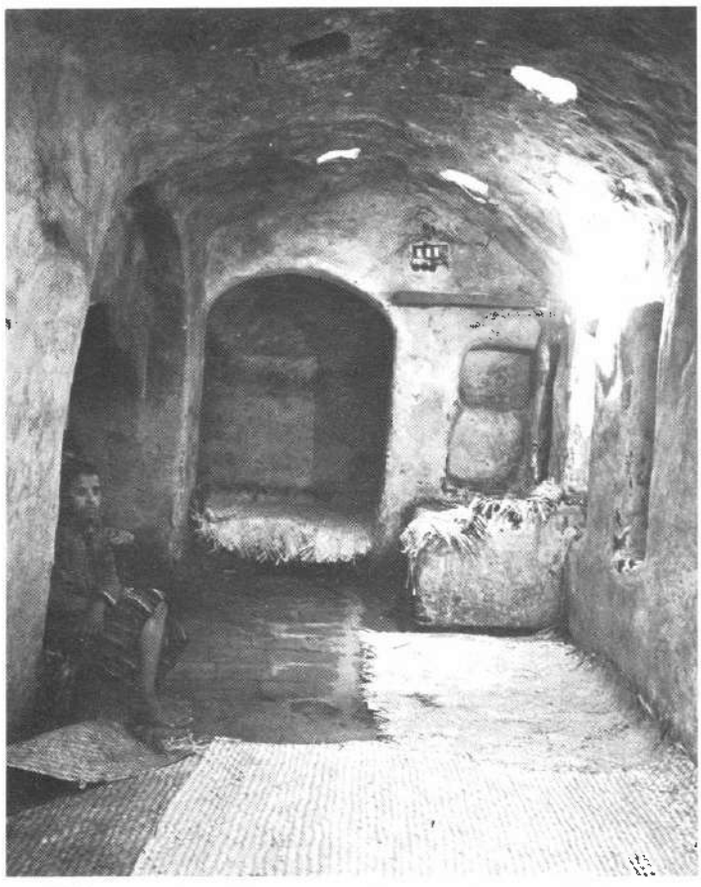


Fig. 23.2 Ḥammām Shukr. Roof plan, ground plan and long section through the building.



23.14 Ḥammām Shukr. The interior of the changing room. While the niches around the walls are mostly storage places for clothes, that to the right of the kneeling figure extends to the floor and is a *miḥrāb* to mark the direction of prayer.



23.15 Ḥammām Shukr. The other end of the changing room with the entrance to the baths on the left. The recess in the end wall forms a reclining place for an important patron. The raised platform to the right of it and the niches behind it serve as the sitting place for the bath keeper.

Ḥammām al-Maydān

Situated in the Maydān al-Qaṣr (re-named since 1962 Maydān al-Laqiyyah,[29] another soldier involved in the assassination attempt on Imām Aḥmad in 1962), the large open area and parade ground of earlier times immediately west of the Castle of Ṣan'ā'. It was built by the Ottoman Pasha Ḥasan[30] who left the Yemen in 1013/1604-5.

Ḥammām Yāsir

Situated north east of Sūq al-Milḥ. It is believed to be the oldest public bath in Ṣan'ā'.

Ḥammām al-Faysh or Ḥammām al-Qā'

Situated in Qā' al-Yahūd, reputedly Jewish, and supposedly dating from the early 12th/18th century. It is said that the Jews made it private and restricted to the Jewish community. The *ḥammāmī* of al-Faysh says it was Makhlafah that was the old Jewish bath; this seems more likely. It is now one of the public baths.

Ḥammām al-Faysh is confirmed by those now living in the former Jewish Quarter as having formerly been called Ḥammām al-Usṭā by the Jews. Brauer[31] in discussing the important synagogue Knis bêt Mori Aharon 'Arāgī ('Arāqī) ha-Kohēn, also known as Knis bêt el-Usṭa', adds, 'Zu dem Knis gehören ein Warmbad und mehrere Häuser, deren Erträgnisse für die bestimmt sind, die im Knis dem Lernen obliegen.' So among the Jews like the Muslims a *ḥammām* was linked with a religious institution which its revenues helped support.

Ḥammām Makhlafah

As Ḥammām al-Faysh.

The statistics given by writers for the number of baths in Ṣan'ā' from the time of al-Rāzī onwards show a remarkable consistency, except that for some imaginary period of mythical expansion of Ṣan'ā' located about the time of the 'Abbāsid al-Rashīd there is a legendary tale that Ṣan'ā' had 12,000 mosques and a like number of baths.[32] For the 18th century Niebuhr[33] gives twelve large baths, Manzoni[34] adds to this figure a bath at al-Mutawakkil and another at Bīr al-'Azab. Zabārah[35] for the beginning of the 14th/20th century, i.e. about the same time as Manzoni, gives the figure of twenty baths on the authority of another writer.

The Bath

The baths are usually partly sunk underground in order to retain their heat. A short twisting passage to prevent sight lines into the interior of the bath from the street leads, down stairs, to a changing room, from which a further descent leads to a series of small temperate and hot rooms, covered by barrel vaults and domes.

Architectural Description of a Typical Public Bath (Ḥammām Yāsir)

The bath presents an unpretentious facade to the street. Only 2.25m high and 5m wide, it is merely a white-washed stone wall pierced by a single doorway. The door stands open when the baths are in use.

Inside this doorway three rough stone steps descend into an outer lobby containing a stone seat on the south, and two doors (fig. 23.1). That on the north is the door of a storeroom for fuel. That on the east gives into an inner corridor (*majza'*), which leads north until the main entrance to the changing room (*mikhla'/makhla'*)[36] is reached, in the eastern wall of the corridor.

The changing room is a large room a little less than five metres square, covered by a single high dome on squinch arches (pl. 23.2). The latter frame curious semi-domes made of corbelled, pointed, arches with straight sides. Around the base of the dome runs a chevron pattern which is used to narrow the span of the dome, the top moulding overhanging the lower one. Inside the door a small enclosure surrounded by a low kerb marks the limits of the area in which shoes may be worn, as in mosques also (pl. 23.3). Against the west wall a raised masonry and plaster platform has underneath a deep recess for storage of shoes. The platform is that on which the *ḥammāmī* sits to control admission to the bath. Usually there is a recess in the wall for a *madā'ah* pipe, or even a cupboard. In the case of Ḥammām Yāsir there is a recess behind the platform. Most of the stone floor is covered with a layer of clean palmleaf mats (*ḥaṣīrah*) on which the users of the bath may change their clothes, recline after the bath, and where commonly prayers are said. Around the walls is a series of niches, and above them wooden hooks, then a wooden shelf, for the storage of clothes. Valuables are left with the *ḥammāmī* who keeps on his platform a locked wooden chest for safe-guarding them. There is a niche extending to the ground on the northern side, a *miḥrāb* indicating

29 It is doubtful if this new name is used however.
30 *Ghāyat al-amānī*, II, 784.
31 *Jemenitischen Juden*, 306.
32 Cf. *Nashr al-'arf*, I, 15-16, quoting al-Ṭayyib Abū Makhramah and Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn's *Anbā' al-zaman*.
33 *Description*, I, 333.
34 *El Yémen*, 112—he gives the fees for that bath and its attendants also.
35 *Nashr al-'arf*, loc. cit.
36 This word is found in al-Khazrajī, *al-'Uqūd al-lu'lu'iyyah*, II, 26, and *Nashr al-'arf*, I, 113.

23.16 Ḥammām Shukr. Inside the cold entrance room. The changing room is visible in the background. Entrance is from the right and was originally screened from the passageway through to the hot room in the foreground by a row of arcades which have since been broken. To the left is the cold pool.

the direction of Mecca.[37] Entered through an arch on the western side of this large domed space is another smaller changing room, for private use. This has a low dome and a barrel-vaulted recess to the south.

The large domed changing room is separated from the smaller circulation space to the south by both a small and a large arch, and by two high steps making a descent of fifty-six centimetres. A kerb just inside the arches defines the dry palmleaf-matted area of the changing room from the wet stone-paved area on the south. The large arch is supported in the middle by an ancient pre-Islamic column, which appears to be a later reinforcement (pl. 23.5). This assumption may be incorrect, however, as a number of other baths have a central column under this arch. Perhaps the column was originally intended to separate people descending to the bath from people ascending from it, a pattern still preserved in Ḥammām Shukr (fig. 23.2), and in the ablution places (*maṭāhir*) of *ghayls* at some mosques. To the west, within the changing room, is a low wall on which men's wet waist wrappers (*fūṭahs*) are placed after the bathing process is finished; on the top step alongside they have been modestly removed under a dry wrapper brought by the bath-keeper. From this wall the wet *fūṭahs* can be easily collected as the user leaves the bath after he has dressed and prepared for the street.

On the other side, the small arch in the south east corner contains the small pool of clean cold water, hollowed from a single square stone, which is used by bathers coming from the bath as a water reservoir from which to wash their feet before re-entering the mat-covered area of the changing room.

The lower room on the south side of the changing room is roofed on the west by a smaller dome, with the same squinches as that of the changing room, and by a low barrel vault running south. Like the big dome of the changing room, both the dome and barrel vault of this space are pierced with small toplights closed on the outside with glass sheets (perhaps originally alabaster) set in plaster. A domed ceiling (*saqf muqabbab*) is called *jumān* or *jumlūl*.

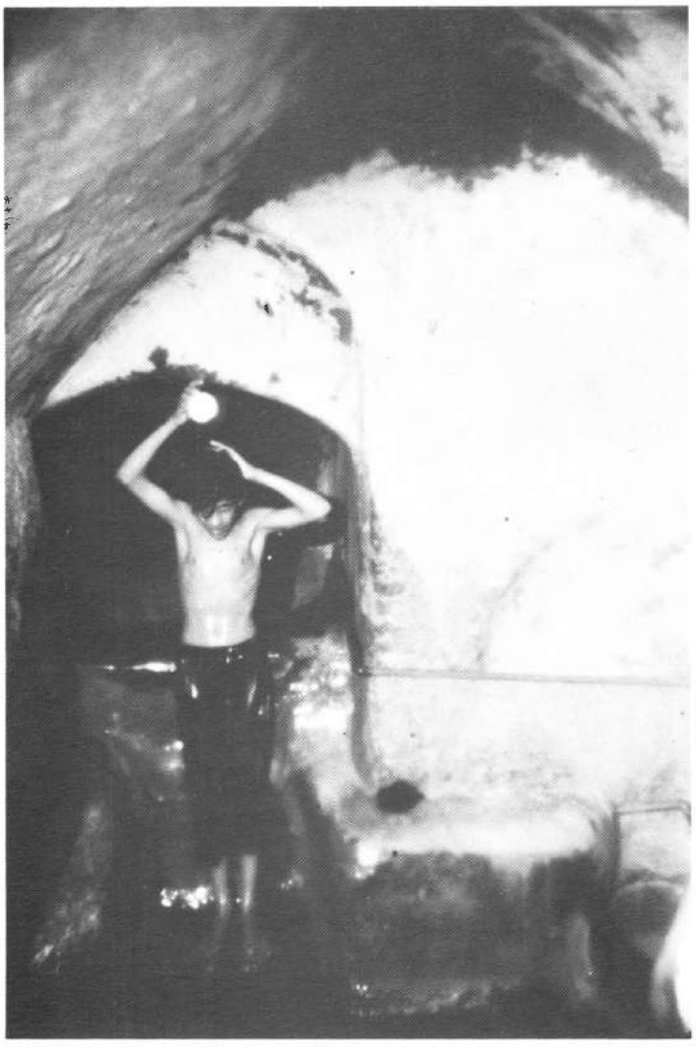
The area under the dome is half-filled by a large tank (*barik*)[38] of cold water with its lip at chest height (pl. 23.6). It appears that, since all baths contain such a pool adjoining the changing room, it must once have been intended for some special purpose. That in Ḥammām Yāsir is 2.50m long, 1.50m wide, and 1.25m deep. Others, although they are often polygonal in shape, are not very much bigger. They are therefore not big enough for a bather to swim in, but would merely be used for a cold dip, as was the practice of the Romans and the Byzantines after they had completed their hot bathing. Alternatively, it has been suggested that this cold pool was used for washing clothes, and particularly *fūṭahs;* it is still used for the latter function by some bathers before leaving the baths. A final interpretation is that the cold pool was mainly intended as a reservoir from which the bather, having emerged from the hot rooms, dipped water to shower himself with cold water in completion of the bathing process; there is a row of circular stone seats against the eastern wall under the barrel vault which would seem to confirm this theory, although no similar practice survives to the present day.

Originally, a door in the south east corner gave access to the first of the temperate rooms (*mabrad/frigidarium*) on the southern side. Recently this has been blocked up and the room given over entirely to the function of a sump for the drainage, following a modern innovation introduced into many of the Ṣan'ā' baths.

37 Not all baths have a *miḥrāb* in the *mikhla'*.
38 In al-Rawḍah bath this whole room is called *al-barik*.

23.17 Ḥammām Shukr. The interior of the west temperate room showing two stone basins for water from which individual washing may be done. Pipes in the walls lead hot and cold water to each of these basins.

23.19 Ḥammām Shukr. The interior of the central hot room. The fire is directly under the floor of this room, which therefore has to be cooled by throwing water across it before patrons can sit or lie on it.



23.18 Ḥammām Shukr. The interior of the hot dark room on the western side, in which private ablutions are made.

Instead, a new doorway has been created giving direct access into the central temperate room, and incidentally eliminating entirely the urinal which used to exist at the eastern end of the first temperate room.

The number of temperate rooms is now reduced to two, the domed central room and a northern room which is darker and covered with a barrel vault. The dome is supported on a very simple kind of corbelled pendentive (pl. 23.7). A large arch spans across the small door between the two surviving temperate rooms, suggesting that they may once have been one space. A similar arch in the same place exists at Ḥammām Shukr (pl. 23.8). There are three small stone seats in the central room of Ḥammām Yāsir, but none at all in the northern room, which is essentially a washing floor on which the bathers sit, using water from one of the two square stone basins. Hot and cold water pipes lead into these basins. By contrast the central room is to a large extent a waiting area, and has no basins.

From this central temperate room an eastern door gives into the central hot room (pl. 92), which is flanked by other hot rooms on north and south (pl. 23.9). The central and northern rooms are domed and fairly well lit through the holes pierced in the domes. That to the south, however, is darker, and is meant for the final washing of the private parts of the body.

All three of these rooms are built over a low space, on the pattern of a Roman hypocaust, through which air from the fire circulates. The fire is nearest the central floor which, in spite of a considerable thickness of brick and stone, is so hot that it can barely be touched. Flues extend up the walls of the central rooms, one on the south east corner of the hot room and the other on the north west corner, so that the latter heats also the central temperate room.

The central hot room contains two square stone basins fed by hot and cold water pipes (pl. 23.18). These basins provide water for washing down the hot stone floor so that people can sit or lie on it, but also serve as convenient seats for those who are averse to hot surfaces. In the northern hot room there is a stone bench across the northern wall and part of the western wall, and three square stone basins which provide water for washing. The floor here is not so hot as in the central room.

The southern hot room, the darkest of the three, contains a deep tank on the eastern end which is fed directly from the hot water boiler over the fire (pl. 23.10). The temperature of the water in this tank may, however, be moderated by the addition of cold water which is led to it by a pipe from a cold-water tank nearby on the outside of the building. A square, solid stone basin adjoins this tank which allows a bather to adjust the temperature of the water to his own requirements, if he so wishes. Other baths frequently have a small circular stone seat (*dakkah*) as well, but the absence of one in Ḥammām Yāsir results in the stone basin being frequently used as a seat while hot water is poured over the bather's head and shoulders.

The remainder of the components of the bath may only be viewed by going outside and proceeding across the roof, past a series of projecting domes and barrel vaults (pl. 23.11) to the area east of the hot rooms. Here are located the hot boiler, below the roof level of the bath, and the furnace under it. The latter is stoked by descending a stair which winds down from natural ground level around a central stone core to a depth of nearly 4 metres.

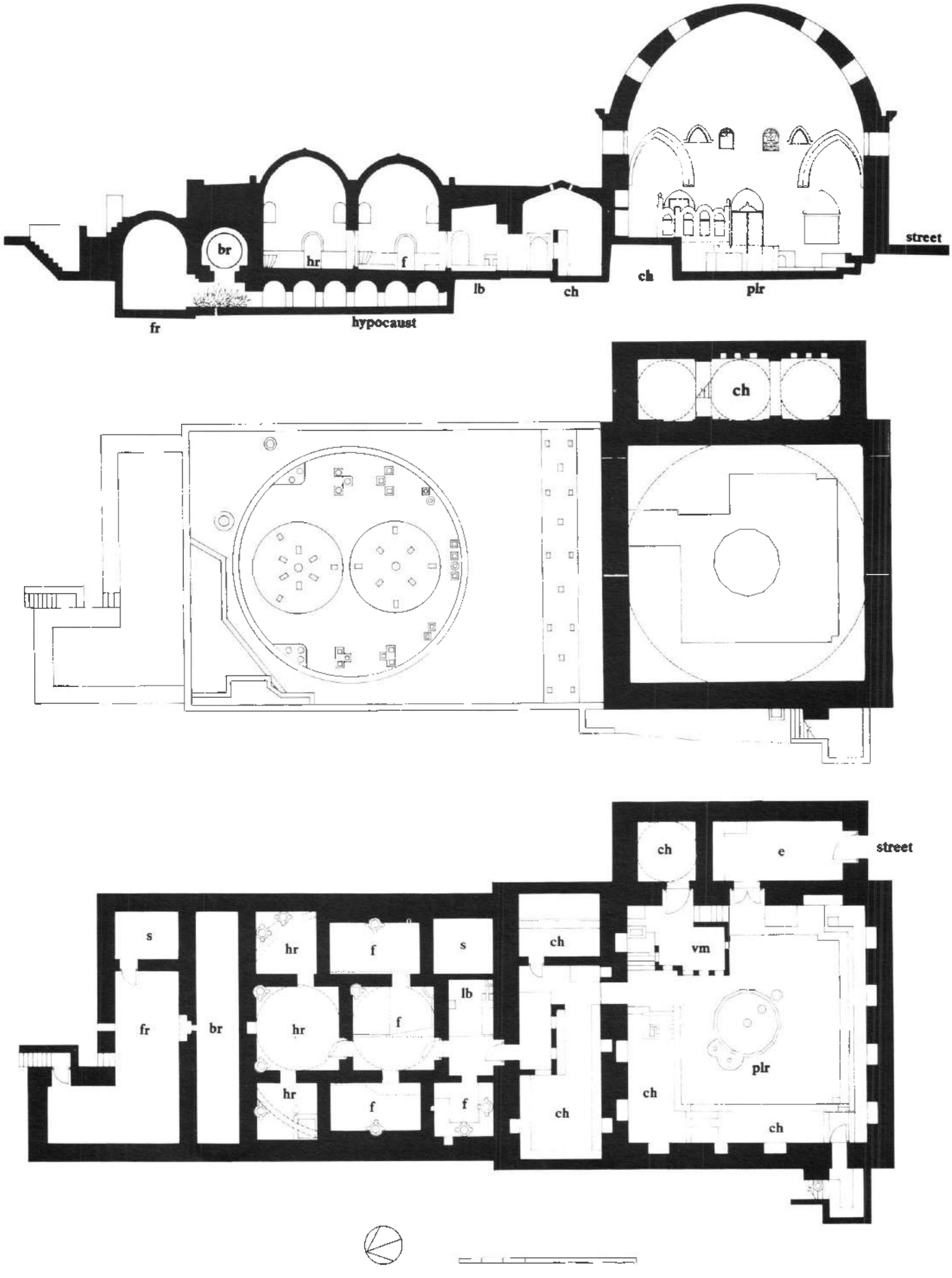
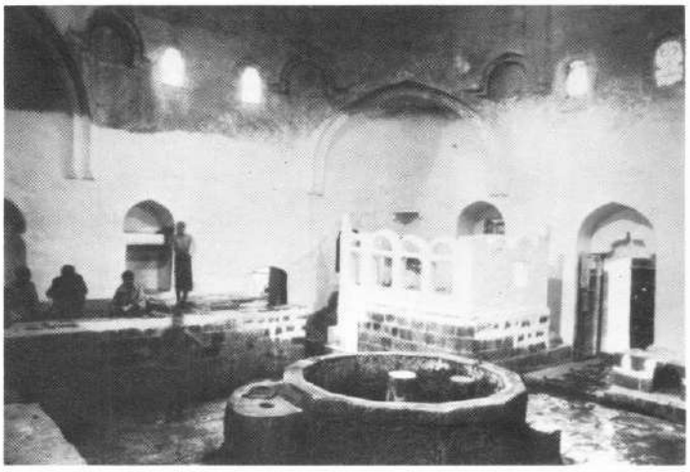


Fig. 23.3 Ḥammām al-Maydān. The roof plan, ground plan and long section through the building.



23.20 Ḥammām al-Maydān. The interior of the main changing hall, showing the musicians' gallery in the far corner, next to the entrance door to the room on the right. Matting originally covered much of the floor and the central system was filled with water.

Storage niches for fuel are built in the walls of the subterranean stoker's room. The fire is fed through a concentrically double-arched opening in the thick east wall of the bath. Further east are two large reservoirs for cold water filled from a well behind them, from which water used to be drawn by animals (pl. 23.12). Today the well has been mechanized.

Variations in the Design of Other Public Baths

All seventeen of the Ṣan'ā' baths are partly underground. With only one exception, discussed below, they present unpretentious facades to the street and frequently pass unnoticed by foreign visitors. The domes of Ḥammām Shukr can be observed from the Sā'ilah on its west side, but this is purely fortuitous (pls. 90 and 23.13).

Ḥammām al-Maydān is unusual in having three changing rooms (fig. 23.3). The innermost one conforms to the typical Ṣan'ā' pattern, but the outer two are designed on precedents from Istanbul and present a fine architectural effect from the street (pl. 93). These are composed of a large square block built of striped black and buff stonework, and covered by a high dome, and adjoining it on the east a narrower block of the same materials roofed with three low domes. The low block is double-storeyed, the bottom level providing the outer entrance lobby, and the upper a special *dīwān* for wealthy patrons of the bath, long since fallen into disuse (pl. 23.23). The large domed room, 10.50m square, has wide raised platforms around all four sides, built of stone and provided with recesses for hot braziers underneath (pls. 23.21 and 22, and fig. 23.3).

Only in the north east corner is the platform replaced by a raised enclosure surrounded by arcaded screens, in which the *ḥammāmī* sat, and which was also reputedly used by musicians for the entertainment of patrons.[39] This large room was apparently originally intended to provide the wide range of facilities still enjoyed by patrons of public baths in Istanbul. The patrons reclined on carpets spread on the platforms, and were served with coffee or other drinks and the *madā'ah* (water pipe).

In the centre of this room in the Ḥammām al-Maydān, and in an equivalent position in a small number of other baths (e.g., Ḥammām al-Sulṭān, pl. 23.28, and Ḥammām Saba', pl. 23.27)is a polygonal or circular pool with a central fountain.[40] Adjoining this central pool, and quite separate from the main changing area, there is sometimes a raised *dīwān* in a recess (e.g., in Ḥammām al-Ṭawāshī).

From these forward changing halls the intending bather proceeds to the inner changing room, and then straight into the temperate and hot rooms, which in al-Maydān resemble closely those of Ḥammām Yāsir, described above.

Other baths, however, have the circular pool with its central fountain in the transitional space between the changing room and the first of the temperate rooms, that is, in the room which in Ḥammām Yāsir contains a square corner pool. An important difference in some cases is that the entrance lobbies lead into the transitional space, from which the changing room is then reached. This means that the intending bather is greeted by a cheerful fountain playing in a central pool before he goes through to change (pl. 23.28).

In other cases, such as Ḥammām Shukr and Ḥammām Sūq al-Baqar, the entrance is first into the transitional space (*majza'*) before the changing room (*mikhla'*) is reached, but there is no central pool and fountain, the cold pools being unpretentious square pools on one side of the room (fig. 23.2).

The general plan of three temperate (*isqāh/mabrad*) and three hot rooms (*ṣadr* = *calidarium*) is varied only twice, in Ḥammām Saba' and Ḥammām Sūq al-Baqar, which have only two temperate and two hot rooms. Usually the three hot rooms have the fire underneath them, while the temperate rooms have flues (*maṭraṭ*) on one side. Hot rooms have to be re-plastered with *nūrah* about once a year.

The arrangements for heating the floor of the hot rooms by a hypocaust system does not change from bath to bath, though the number of rooms with floors heated in this way does change up to as many as six in Ḥammām al-Maydān. The number and position of the flues in the walls varies considerably, from only one flue in the wall between the central hot and temperate rooms in the case of Ḥammām Shukr (fig. 23.2), to four in Ḥammām Saba' (fig. 23.4).

In Ḥammām al-Maydān the solid stone basins are elaborate in form, with three lobes on a circular shape, and decorated at the sides with carved ornament. Ḥammām Shukr, like a number of the other baths, has circular stone basins instead of square ones; there are rough square stones projecting from the walls of two of the hot rooms above head height, used for exercise on some occasions, but perhaps intended primarily to hold oil lamps at night, before electricity was introduced. Similar projecting stones occur in a number of other baths; the remainder have niches in the walls for the same purpose.

The furnace (*miḥrāq*) room, boilers, reservoirs and wells are similar in all the baths. A chimney is called *madkhanah*, and a flue under the floor, *millah*.

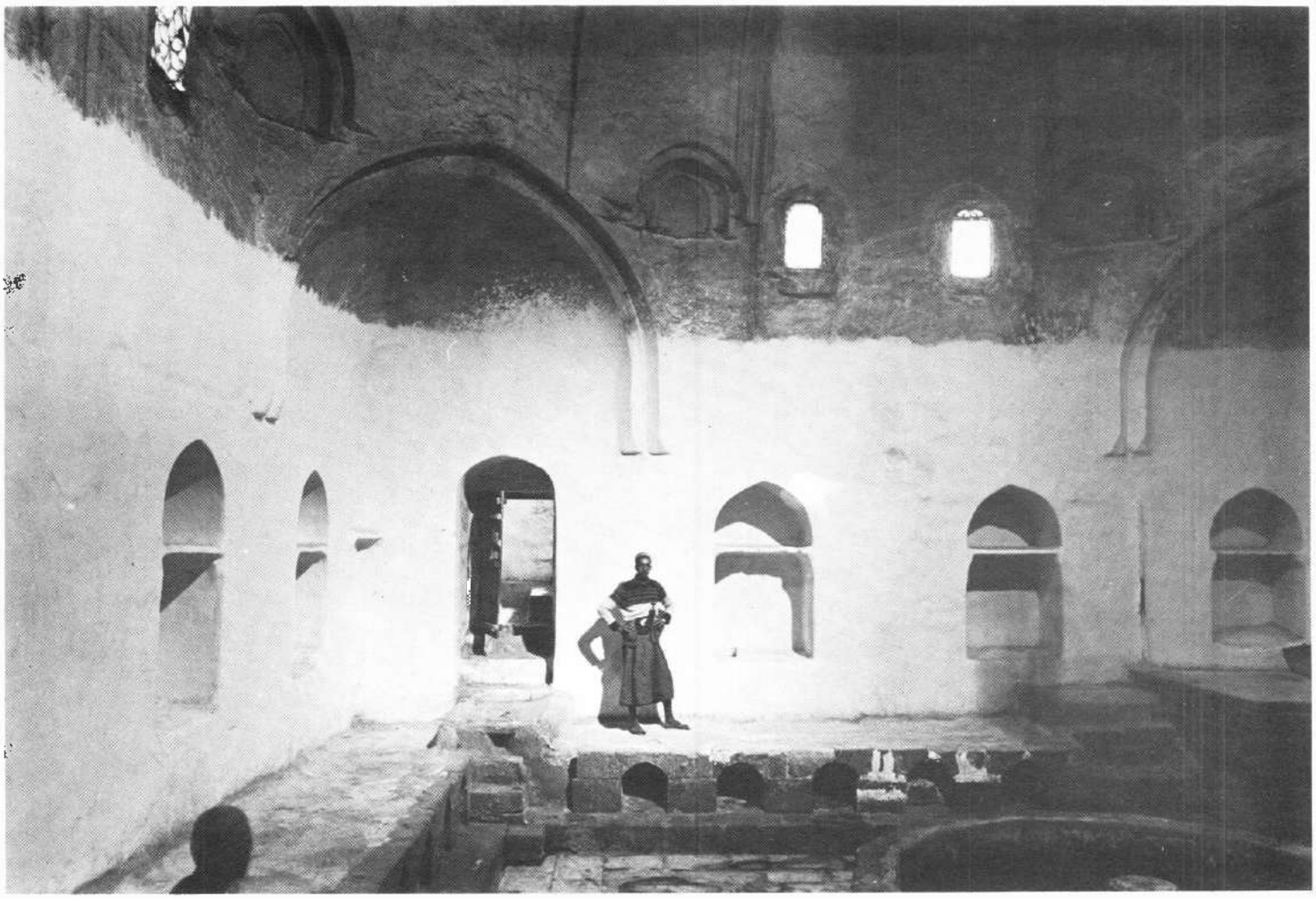
Construction

The lowest levels of the bath are those of the furnace and the hypocaust (*shāri'*) about half a metre high under the hot rooms (pls. 23.24 and 25). They are built of red brick (*yājūr*); the hypocaust is made up of a series of barrel vaults about a metre wide and high, running from the furnace towards the temperate rooms. The furnace and the space containing the boiler above it are usually barrel vaults running in a transverse direction, and slightly wider in diameter. The boiler is a large cauldron, two or three metres in diameter made of brass or copper. In Ḥammām al-Maydān the hypocausts of the furnace are built entirely of brick domes.

The outside walls are built of squared stones on a stone foundation, a construction which extends up to roof height. Internal

39 Zaydī Imāms tended to frown upon music and sometimes to prohibit it.

40 In a bath the fountain is called *fisqiyyah*—the pool is called *birkah* which is dug into the ground (*maḥfūrah fi 'l-arḍ*). The word *shādhurwān* is only applied to fountains in *mafārij* reception rooms.



23.21 Ḥammām al-Maydān. The interior of the great domed changing room. In winter braziers with hot coal in them could be placed in the niches under the raised changing platform to keep it warm. A fountain played from the centre of the pool.

walls are sometimes brick, sometimes stone; if brick they are invariably protected with a thick layer of hard gypsum plaster which is then oil-painted. Internal stone walls are of roughly coursed ashlar, with openings spanned in brick or stone arches. Wooden ceilings are not used in any part of the bath.

Most of the domes and barrel vaults of the ceiling construction are of brick, often with parabolic rather than semicircular cross-sections to give them additional strength. They are pierced by a small number of glazed holes called *al-thurayyā*, but at al-Rawḍah bath simply *khuzqī* (pl., *khizqān*) or holes, to admit natural light to the spaces below. The domes stand on a variety of squinch arches and simple pendentives, or even on short beams spanning across the corners (pls. 23.4, 7 and 28). They are thickly plastered externally.

All the brick used in the bath is of the dark red, highly fired type; even so, the life of the domes and barrel vaults is said to be shorter than the rest of the structure, doubtless due to cracking caused by differential expansion, and by the penetration of water. It is doubtful if any are more than two hundred years old, whereas the substructure walls are in many cases much older.

The bricks are sometimes thicker than those used in normal building, up to 5cm thick, perhaps in an attempt to strengthen the structure.

Fuel

For the fuel of the bath wood is sparingly used since it has always been expensive in the central highlands and is not easily available. Alternative fuels include skins, feathers, and bones from the slaughter yards. Old rubber flipflop shoes (*shubshub*, pl., *shabāshib*) and shoes (*qanāṭir*) are burned nowadays and burn well—the supply of these is of course limited. The most important fuel is human excrement (*kharā*) which is stated to give a great heat and therefore to be specially appropriate for heating the bath. The excrement is collected from the lower level of the small chamber at the bottom of the 'long drop' (*manṭal*) found in every house for this purpose. The man employed for this purpose is called *mujaḥḥith* and he takes the excrement packed in skins through the streets to the *maḍḥā* of the bath, an open court, where it dries, though it is already so dry when removed as to be almost odourless. It may also be spread on the roof as well as in the open court of the bath which is often at a level with the roof, and contains the reservoirs and well (pl. 23.26). The name *mukharwī* (from *kharā*) is also given to the man who takes out the excrement from the houses—the fodder (*'alaf*) for his donkey is supplied by the bath-keeper. The *ḥammāmī*, we are informed, used also to use dung collected from the streets.

At al-Rawḍah the fuels used are cow-dung in rounds (*kibyah*, plur., *kibi'*), but there was also human excrement ready for burning there, but no heap of firewood which is evidently scarce. We noticed that when the fire was lit the entrance to the furnace was stopped up with clay bricks. A long rake (*mighrafah*) is used to remove the ash from the fire—this the proprietor of al-Rawḍah bath uses on his fields.

In Ṣan'ā' the Banī Quṭayb, from a village of Jabal al-Sawd, part of Jabal 'Ayāl Yazīd, used to sell to the country-folk the excrement from the privies and ash from the houses of the city, so it was not all used for the public baths.

The donkeyman who supplies the bath with fuel also removes the ash to sell to the orchards and vegetable gardens as manure.

In former times, according to the Hebrew sources, the bath-

keepers used themselves to collect the excrement burned in the furnaces of the baths. After the decree that the Jews should be obliged to make the collection the bath-keepers complained that they would lose a part of their livelihood through this new regulation. It was eventually agreed that the Jewish collectors should sell to the bath-keepers but at a very low price, and the bath-keepers should re-sell it to the customers to whom they have previously sold it. There was even a fixed measure named *khabshat al-kharā/khar'* (the basket of ordure) which the Jewish collectors filled each day to sell to the bath-keepers, and the latter were always complaining that the Jews gave them short measure. The Jews complained to the bath-keepers for not giving them the full amount owed to them. The bath-keepers complained that they were not properly paid, and many of the strong and powerful did not pay at all! The collectors were actually paid by the Jewish community, and there is an allusion to this in the case brought by the Inspectorate of Waqfs against the Jews of Qā' al-Yahūd for the payment of rent.[41] The Jewish proverb runs, *'Ḥiml al-khar' 'ala 'l-rās wa-la ḥājah li-'l-nās,* A load of ordure on the head rather than having to depend on (other) people.' It seems that in Ṣan'ā' they took it out of the recesses by hand. At 'Amrān they used to add ash (*ramād*) to the ordure (*zabīl*) until it became like earth (*turāb*)—the Arabs gave them money (*zalaṭ*) for it.[42]

Water Supply

There is naturally always a well very close to the bath house. The water drawn from the well passes into the main reservoirs (pl. 23.11), from which it is drawn as required through either the hot boiler or the cold reservoir immediately adjacent to the bath. There is a system of pipes throughout the bath, carrying both hot and cold water to the hot and temperate rooms. There are no taps in the pipes, instead cotton swabs are inserted into their ends, which can only be drawn out by calling one of the bath attendents, who removes them with a hooked wire. The tapless pipe end is called *bizbūz,* but a *ḥanafī* (sic) is one that can be closed with a tap, and it is used for hot water.

Drainage

The floors of all rooms in the bath slope quite steeply towards a common drainage point situated on the line of the wall between the first of the temperate rooms and the changing or intermediate room, whichever is the closer. At this point the waste water ceases to flow across the stone floors, or in special channels provided for the purpose (which sometimes pass through the walls in small openings). Instead it descends underground in a sump and enters a large underground sewer, usually high enough to admit a man. These sewers are said to have originally extended for considerable distances to allow the water to be used in a vegetable garden or orchard. Now, however, the waste water from a bath or house is led to a wide stone or bricklined pit by a channel called *qū'ah,* closely resembling a well but not as deep, situated usually just in front of the public bath, in the street. This is covered over with beams and stones so that it is not visible in the roadway, but it is opened every few years for cleaning. The tendency of the sump to get blocked or empty slowly has led many bath owners to close the first temperate room completely, providing entry instead directly into the central temperate room.

Open Time at the Baths

As a rule the baths are open four days for men and three for women, though arrangements vary at different baths. Men usually have the use of the bath on the Thursday, and always on the Friday. At one bath however the programme runs—Sunday, women; Monday, men; Tuesday, women; Wednesday, men; Thursday, women; Friday, men; Saturday, men.[43] Some baths open more days for women than for men—which is more profitable to the bath-keeper since women remain longer and pay more, almost twice as much as men—but this is unpopular with the men of the district. Men go to the bath from dawn until about 9 or 10 p.m., but on women's days the bath is open from 7 a.m. until 6 p.m. As a sign that it was a women's day the entrance to the bath used to be half curtained over, but this custom has fallen into desuetude of more recent years. E. W. Lane[44] remarks that in the Cairo of his day a cloth was hung outside the bath at the time for women. In Ramaḍān the bath is open for men from the evening to after Ṣalāt al-Fajr, the Dawn Prayer, and from 9 a.m. onwards up to the late afternoon (*'aṣr*) for women. The fires burn from 2 to 4 a.m., from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., and from 5 p.m. to 6.30 p.m., that is to say they have to be lit two hours before the bath opens. The bath is shut outside the hours mentioned, but it is never entirely closed unless it be for repairs.

Bathers and Bathing

As a well-established custom, to take the bath in Ṣan'ā' has its fixed procedures and social conventions. These, to judge, for example, by accounts given by Lane for early 19th century Cairo, follow the same broad general patterns in other Islamic countries. They compare also with the humorous narrative of Morier's Hajji Baba of Isfahan and Mark Twain's wry experiences of the bath at Istanbul. We actually have a description by Manzoni[45] of taking the bath in Ottoman Ṣan'ā'. Two modern accounts of the use of the bath follow, the first by the writer and the second by Qāḍī Ismā'īl—they describe the procedure and customs of the bath from rather different angles.

The Use of the Baths

Description 1

The patron of the bath usually arrives with two clean *fūṭahs* in addition to that which he is already wearing, a towel, soap, and his own rough glove and soap glove, wrapped in a large scarf. Sometimes he will carry a complete change of clean clothing as well.

He takes off his shoes at the entrance to the changing room, and leaves them in the opening under the *ḥammāmī's* seat.[46] He is then attended by the *ḥammāmī* until a suitable clear space has been found for him to change, with a hook, and a clear shelf or niche for his clothes. The *ḥammāmī* then takes all his valuables and money back to a box on one side of his seat, into which they are securely locked. The *ḥammāmī* is responsible for any clothes or property lost in the bath, and is naturally careful to safeguard possessions.[47]

The bather dresses in one of his (or her) spare *fūṭahs.* The men wear them around the waist extending almost to the ground, the women wear a longer *fūṭah* which ought to begin above the

41 See p. 429b. Ameen Rihani, *Arabian peak and desert*, London, 1930, says that the Jew sells the excrement at about 20 U.S. cents a donkeyload.

42 *Jemenica*, 65, no. 404. Brauer, 254, also deals with the collection of excrement by the Jews.

43 Van den Broeke (see p. 109a) says that men have the bath in the morning and women in the afternoon. According to E. W. Lane, *Modern Egyptians*, London, 1895, 349-54 (ch. xvi), of the 60-70 *ḥammāms* in Cairo some were for men only, some for women and small children only, and some for men in the morning and women in the afternoon. Cf. S. Poole (Lane's sister), *The Englishwoman in Egypt: letters from Cairo*, London, 1844.

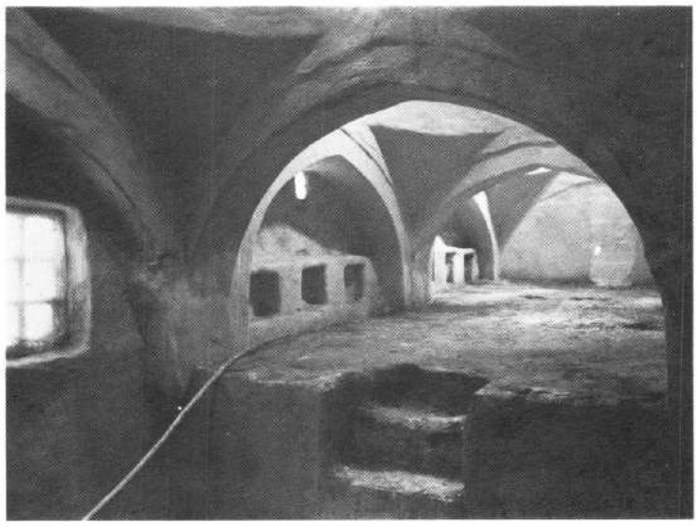
44 Loc. cit.

45 *El Yémen*, 112 seq.

46 Shoes at al-Rawḍah bath are kept under the *isqāh.*

47 Cf. the regulation in *Qānūn Ṣan'ā',* section 49, ii, seq.

23.22 Ḥammām al-Maydān. The interior of the changing room showing the great dome on squinch arches. The use of the niches in the wall for holding clothes can be seen. The stepping stone in the foreground allowed access for the washing of clothes in the central cold water pool.



23.23 Ḥammām al-Maydān. The interior of the *dīwān*, the private changing room over the entrance passageway to the bath.

breasts.[48] A few bathers wear rubber sandals into the bathing rooms, but this practice is unusual.

48 Nothing else is worn. This has evidently always been the case. Usāmah b. Munqidh tells how a Crusader lord at the bath tore the *fūṭah* off an attendant and was surprised to find the man had shaved the pubic hair. See P. K. Hitti, *Memoirs of an Arab-Syrian gentleman,* reprint, Beirut, 1964, 165.

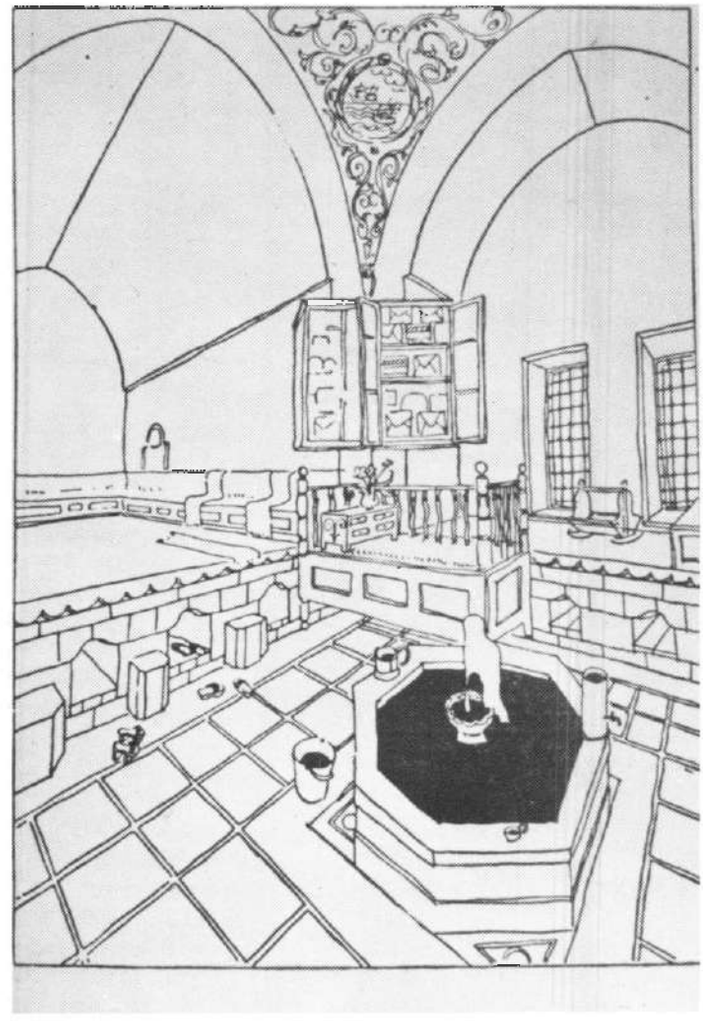
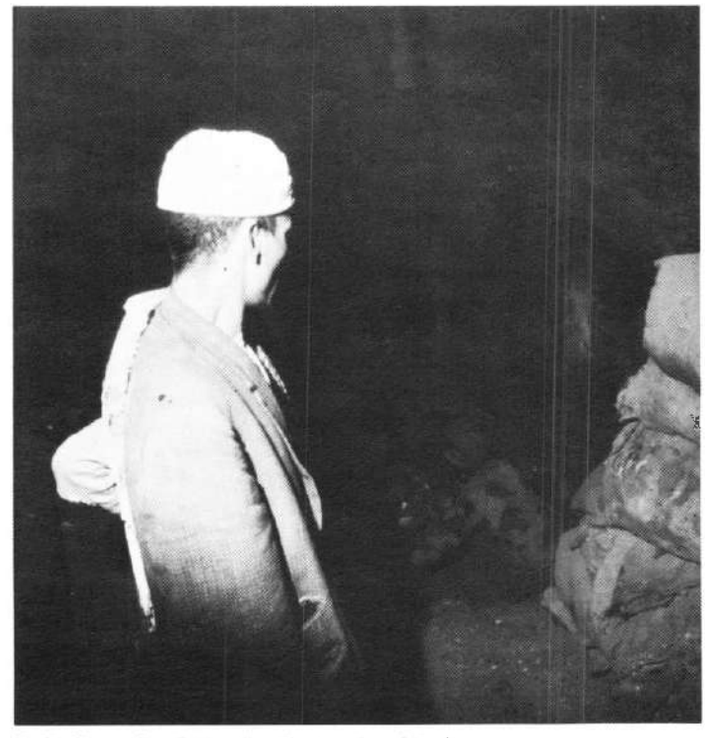
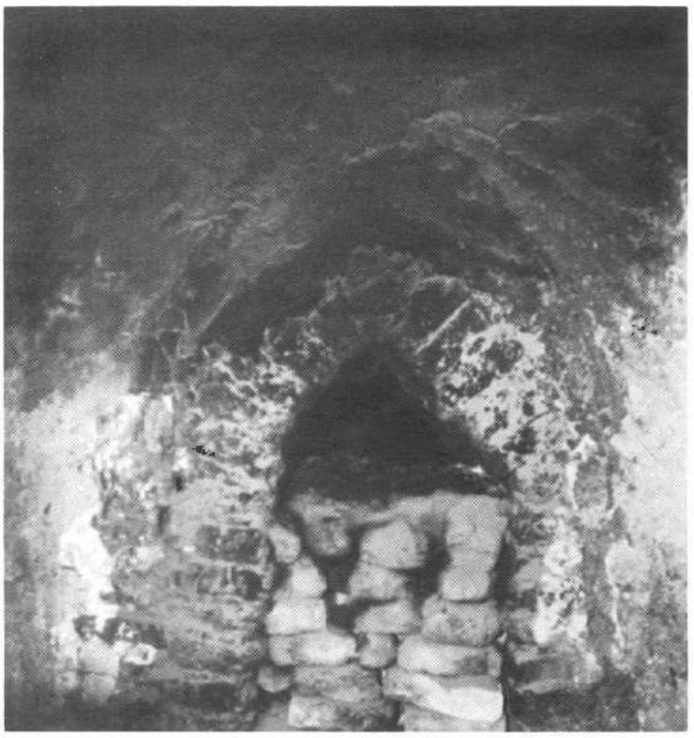


Fig. 23.4 Damascus, Ḥammām. An Ottoman bath contemporary with Ḥammām al-Maydān in Ṣan'ā'.



23.24 Ḥammām al-Maydān. The interior of the furnace room.



23.25 Ḥammām al-Maydān. The mouth of the furnace under the floor level of the baths.

The bather then proceeds to the top of the steps leading down from the changing room to the bath proper. There he washes his feet using water dipped from the small stone basin provided. He next proceeds right through the temperate rooms to the dark hot room, where the attendant douses him several times with very hot water dipped from the hot tank in that room. The attendant then goes with him into the central hot room carrying a dipper filled with water, and swills down an area of the hot floor so that the bather can sit or lie on it. The bather does this for five or ten minutes, unless he is trying to reduce weight or recover from an illness, in which case he might remain for as much as an hour. In the latter event the bather will not remain continuously in the hot room, but will go out to the temperate or intermediate rooms at regular intervals to cool off.

The purpose of remaining in the hottest room for this period is to build up a sweat, prior to the dirt and the sweat being removed by rubbing down with a piece of pumice stone or a rough woollen glove. Women prefer the former. To accentuate the process, exercises are sometimes performed by individuals, or, the room being relatively free, a group of people will form a line or a circle and go through the motions of a Yemeni dance, one or more of their number humming the rhythm. Until a few years ago, it is said, this dancing was particularly in evidence for an hour after the midday meal, the young men being obliged to take part in it for exercise, or the young women when the bath was being used by them. This practice has largely disappeared, however. Occasionally a bather calls an attendant to massage him in the hot room, but if this practice was ever common it is now in decline.

Several times during the period spent sweating the bather calls the attendant from the dark room to douse him with a dipper of hot water. Finally he proceeds to a part of the bath in which he can find a vacant space next to a stone basin, and then either rubs the sweat and dirt from himself, peeling off the top layer of dead skin as he does so, or else he engages a bath attendant to do it for him.[49] Members of a family or close friends often rub each other down. Children in particular are expected to attend fathers (or mothers) and elder brothers (or sisters). The process is completed by a careful dousing with water, adjusted to the desired temperature, from the stone basin, which has been completely cleaned out and filled with fresh water from the hot and cold pipes either by the bather himself or by the attendant.

Some bathers then return to the central hot room and undergo the cycle of sweating and rubbing-down a second or even a third time.

Others go directly to the next stage, which is a complete lathering with a cake of soap held inside a cellular glove (*līf*). The soaping begins with a triple lathering of the hair on the head, the soap being washed off in between, and continues to the upper body, then the outside of the legs under the *fūṭah*, the bather standing during the latter process. After a cursory washing off with water the bather then proceeds back through the central hot room to the dark hot room where he washes the private parts of his body and is then doused three or four times from the large dipper by the attendant. Some bathers remove their *fūṭahs* completely here and wash them.

Once doused the bather leaves the hot and the temperate rooms as quickly as he can, and is followed by an attendant carrying a large dipper full of hot water, with which he is finally doused as he stands on the top stone platform of the changing room. After this he is expected to wash his feet again, using cold water dipped from the small stone basin which stands there. The *ḥammāmī* has brought his towel and his second *fūṭah* from his bundle of clothes, and is waiting to help him change by putting the dry *fūṭah* over his head and removing the wet one from underneath. The towel is then wrapped around his shoulders and he proceeds to his place in the changing room; there he squats or sits on his shawl, which is spread out on the mat surface, for up to an hour, talking to the other bathers, taking coffee, tea or water offered him by the *ḥammāmī*, and praying if he is in the bath during the time of prayer. Frequently a number of patrons forms into a rank which is led in a formal prayer by one of their number. There is usually a *miḥrāb* in the wall of the changing room to indicate the direction of Mecca. If he wishes, the customer may be massaged after the bath by the *ḥammāmī* or an attendant in the changing room.

The long wait in the changing room after bathing is due to the time taken for the human body to adjust to the difference between the high temperatures of the hot and temperate rooms and the outside air. During this time the bather continues to perspire and has frequently to dry himself. Eventually he begins to feel cool and then dresses in preparation for his departure. The wet *fūṭahs* and other objects are wrapped in the towel. The scarf is wound around his head to prevent the cold air on his wet hair from giving him a cold. Approaching the *ḥammāmī's* seat he retrieves his valuables, offers a customary fee, either to the *ḥammāmī* alone, or to the *ḥammāmī* and the attendants (see below), and puts on his shoes. He then proceeds to the outer lobby, where he usually sits for a few minutes on the stone seat provided there for that purpose, further to adjust his body to the outside temperature while still sheltered from winds or breezes. He then makes his way home, with the scarf still wrapped around his head.

Description 2—The System of Regulation for the Baths and the Customs Followed There

The baths customarily open their doors daily from dawn-time up to three o'clock in the evening (nine o'clock Frankish (Franjī) time), though generally only a person ritually impure (*junub*) goes to them at this (early) hour. A person who needs to go to the bath may rise an hour or more before dawn so as to go to the bath, and if he finds it locked he goes to the bathman's (*ḥammāmī*) house which is usually near the bath, knocks on his door and asks him to

49 Lane speaks of the joints being cracked in Cairo, and this is sometimes done at Ṣan'ā' today.

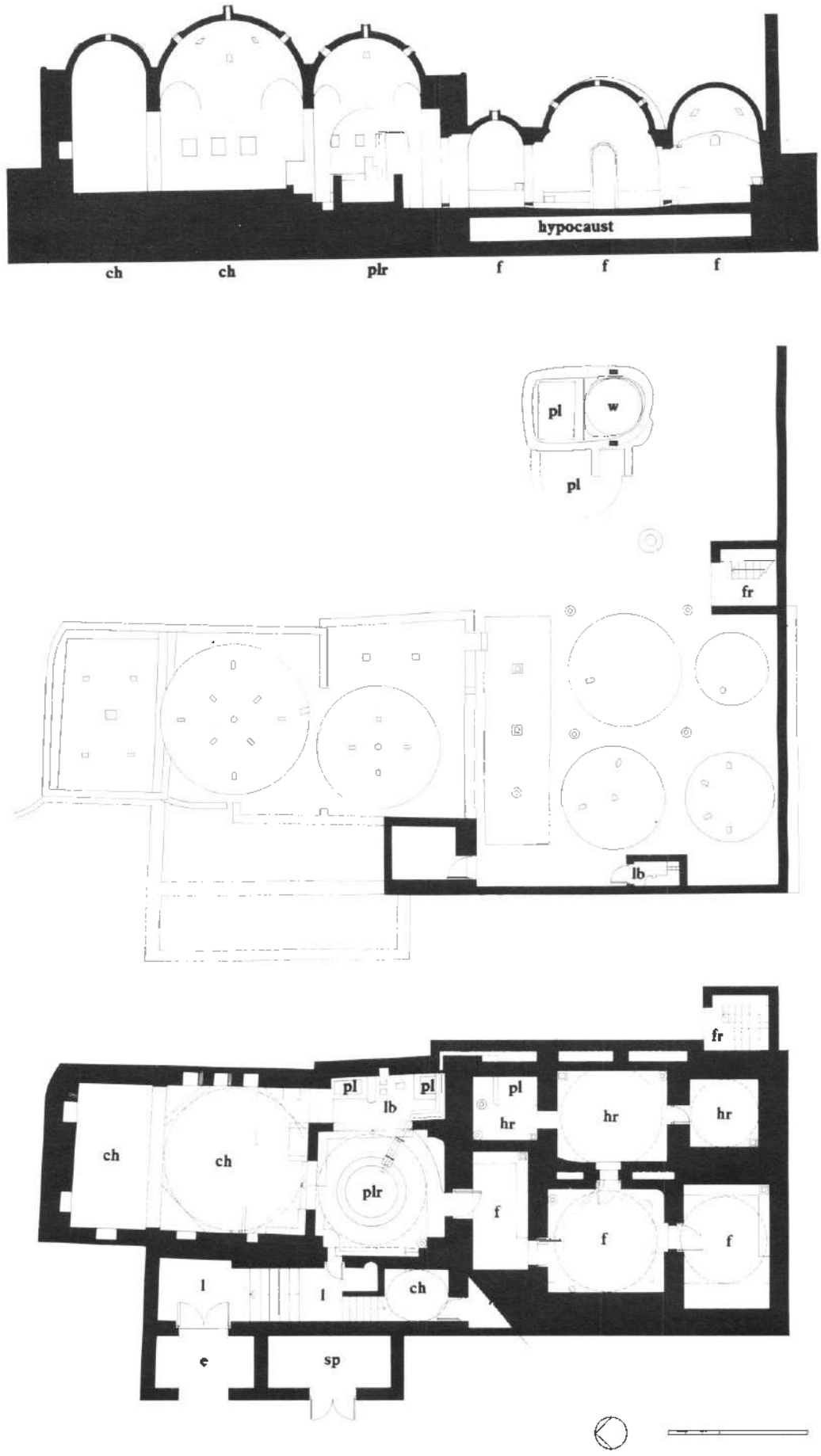


Fig. 23.5 Ḥammām Saba'. The roof plan, ground plan and long section.

open the bath. If he is a person known (to him) he hands him the key, and the bathman goes on sleeping until dawn. In this the system followed is that some baths are for men and some for women. Those baths allotted to men on Fridays the women will have on Saturdays, and so on alternately, day by day, but men use the bath during the morning of the day assigned to women up to one o'clock Arabic (time) (i.e. 7 a.m.), then women come to it. Men likewise use it after the women have left it after sunset up to three o'clock Arabic (time) (9 p.m.).

During the month of Ramaḍān the time appointed for entrance to the baths commences from three o'clock (9 a.m.) in the morning up to sunset for men and women, and, for men only, from evening prayer (*'ishā'*) until dawn.

The Baths at the Festival Seasons (Mawāsim al-a'yād)

Men, women and children alike increasingly repair to the baths during the three or four days before the Festival, and the nearer the Festival approaches the greater the crowding grows and the number of visitors (to them) increases. The festivals are the first Friday of the month of Rajab, the festival of Ramaḍān, i.e., 'Īd al-Fiṭr (the Festival of the Breaking of the Fast), and the Festival of 'Arafah, i.e., 'Īd al-Aḍḥā (the Festival of the Sacrifices).[50] The men along with their male children[51] repair to the baths assigned to men, and the women along with their female children repair (to those assigned to them). The men start by bathing their children so that the heat will not hurt them, then set to bathing their own persons. The women do likewise. The children wait for their fathers and mothers in the *makhla'*, i.e. the place for undressing and dressing, until they come out.

On ordinary days the baths are only moderately frequented. It is a custom of persons of distinction, notables of the town and merchants, each to set aside a special day in the week on which to go to the bath, generally Thursday or Friday,[52] each making it his habit to take the bath at the nearest bath to his dwelling, though some of them go to another bath if that particular day should coincide with the women's day. When he goes to the bath his wife will already have prepared his bath clothes for him in a *buqshah*, i.e. a *ṣurrah* (a cloth used for wrapping and carrying packages) in which she places a *ḥawlī*[53] (*minshafah*, towel)—sometimes she may put in two towels and one or two *fūṭahs* (waist-wrappers)—and she puts in clean clothes from underclothing to outer clothes. The package of clothes (*buqshah*) is accompanied by a prayer-carpet (*sajjādah*), or an *izār* (i.e. *fūṭah*) or a small woollen rug (*shamlah*)[54] to be spread out under him when he emerges from the bath so that he can lie on it till the sweat dries off. With all this is a (cake) of soap, bath-bag[55] (*kīs ḥammām*) and a bunch of palm-fibre (*līfah*)[56] so that he will not have to use the bathman's gear which a person unable to bring these things uses when he goes to the bath.

If he goes by himself he carries these things over his shoulder. If he is a man of rank it may happen that his son or younger brother or his servant will carry them for him—or the servant may go on ahead to the bath with them before the master comes, and await his arrival. As soon as he does arrive the chief bathman (*kabīr al-ḥammāmiyyin*) receives and welcomes him. As he enters the changing room (*makhla'*) he says to those present there, *'Al-salām 'alay-kum wa-na'īm 'alay-kum*, Peace to you, and enjoyment.' To this they reply with the words, *Wa-'alay-kum al-salām, wa-raḥmatu 'llāh wa-barakāt-uh, wa-an'am Allāh 'alay-nā wa-'alay-kum bi-'l-'āfiyah*, Peace to you and the mercy and blessings of God be upon you, and may God give us and you enjoyment of good health.' Then they say to him, *'Wa-antum na'īm-an tasbiqah*,[57] (We wish) you enjoyment in advance' (of taking the bath). To this he replies, *'An'am Allāh 'alay-nā wa-'alay-kum bi-'l-'āfiyah*, May God give us and you enjoyment of good health.' Then he takes off his clothes and hangs them up or folds and wraps them up. He will previously have put on the *fūṭah* in which he is to enter the bath, and wooden shoes (*qibqāb*, pl. *qabāqīb, qabāqib*)[58] to put on inside the bath are brought to him, and one of the bath attendants (*khadamah*) will go in with him to attend him, wash him, rub him with the bag (*takyīs*), and soap him down (*taṣbīn*). Every time he meets anyone (there) before him he will greet him with the same greeting (as above), and that person will return his greeting in the same way. When he enters inside the bath the attendant provides warm water for him in one of the tanks (*ḥawḍ*) so that he can perform the ritual ablution (*tawaḍḍa'*) with it. Most people do not go to the bath without having gone to the lavatory (*mirḥāḍ*) at home so as not to have to use the bath lavatory. He then lies down in the *khizānah* which is the hottest room in the bath till the sweat[59] pours down him—then the attendant (*khādim*) called *mukayyis* or bathman (*ḥammāmī*) comes and rubs him over with the bag (*kīs*) into which he inserts his right hand, rubbing (*da'aka*) his body so as to remove the oily substances and engrained dirt. Another attendant then pours a bucket of warm (*mu'tadil*) water over him, and he gets up and sits on a (masonry) bench (*dakkah*), the bathman sitting in front of his to soap him down twice or thrice, pouring a bucket of warm water over him on each occasion. When he has finished soaping him he gives him the soap along with the *līfah* so that he can wash his private parts (*madhākir*) himself while the bathman gets up to fill the tank with warm (*mu'tadil*) water, or, as it is called in the Yemen, *mukāsir* (tepid) so that he can wash in the water it contains. He takes from him the *fūṭah* upon which he was (lying) so as to wash, clean it and hand it over to the chief bathman along with the other things, i.e., soap, *līfah* and bag, and he takes the towels (*manāshif, ḥawlī*) and a *fūṭah* or towel for the bather to wear as a waist-wrapper inside the bath. To those bathers who happen to be in the bath when he comes out of it, he says, *'Al-salām 'alay-kum wa-na'īm-an 'alay-kum*, Peace to you, and enjoyment.' To this they reply with the greeting, saying, *'An'am Allāh 'alay-nā wa-'alay-kum bi-'l-'āfiyah, wa-antum na'īm*, May God give us and you enjoyment of good health, and may you have enjoyment also.' He replies to them with the same words as they have uttered. When he arrives at the changing room the chief bathman and others say to him, *Na'īm-an 'alay-kum*, a pleasant (bath).' To this he makes the customary reply repeating those expressions to anyone there in the changing room. From there he goes to lie down on the prayer-rug he has brought with him, and the chief bathman or one of his assistants comes to rub (*dalaka*)[60] his feet and massage (*kabbas*) him, then he leaves him as he is so that his sweat may dry off. Thereupon he gets up, puts on his clean clothes, collects his other clothes and puts them in the cloth which held his clean clothes. Then he calls those who attended him in the bath and changing room and gives each a certain sum.

50 Also called 'Īd al-Naḥr.

51 We are told however that small boys under six go to the bath with their mother.

52 On ordinary Friday nights Arab time (our Thursday evenings—*hī jum'ah min al-'ashiyy*) a man spends the evening with his family (*laylat al-jum'ah samrah ma'a ahl-ah*).

53 *Ḥawlī* is Ṣan'ā' and Dhamār dialect.

54 A *shamlah* here means a small woollen rug carried over the shoulder. The *izār* means a *fūṭah*, and the head-cloth is *mi'waz*.

55 At al-Rawḍah bath a *kīs al-ḥammām*, used for older children there, was a small oblong bag to go over the hand—that shown us was made in Syria and was said to cost six *riyāls*.

56 The *līfah* is of two sorts, one is *nasīj mukharram* woven with holes in it, cellular.

57 *Tasbiqah* means *musabbaq-an, muqaddam-an*, i.e., you have not had a bath yet but when you do—then *na'īm-an*, enjoy it!

58 Lane calls the parallel type in Egypt 'high clogs', but they seem to have fallen out of use in Ṣan'ā' now.

59 This is called as below, 'the sweating of the bath (*'arqat al-ḥammām*).' (*'Arqah* is the verbal noun.) Qāḍī Ismā'il cites the proverb, *'Khudh min al-laḥm al-maraq, wa-min al-baqal al-waraq, wa-min al-ḥammām al-'araq*, Of meat take the soup, of white radish the leaves, and of the bath the sweat (it induces).' This proverb is quoted in advising someone to go to the sources of profit or advantage in anything.

60 At al-Rawḍah massage or rubbing off the dirt was called *faḥas, yifḥas*. For children a stone *madlakah*, pl., *madālik*, was used.

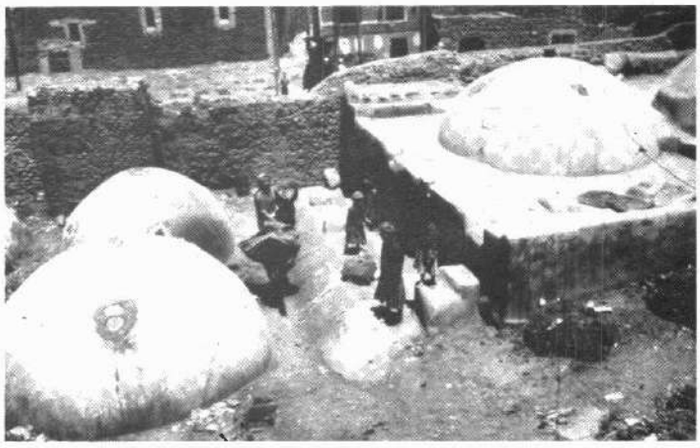
The man who saw to washing and soaping him receives a fee, the man who brought him the water has a similar fee, and the owner of the bath (*ṣāḥib al-ḥammām*) a larger fee. A notable will have coffee[61] served him, either brought from his own dwelling, or else the chief bathman will have it prepared in his house. Sometimes this notable will bring with him a piece of aloes-wood (*'ūd*) to burn in a censer so that he can perfume himself with it, (inviting) those in the changing room to partake in this with him. When he leaves the bath he puts a shawl (*shāl*)[62] over his head, but some put on the towel (*ḥawlī*), winding it round the whole of his head so that only part of his face remains (uncovered) so as not to be exposed to the air (*hawā'*)—this action being called *taṭbīq*, from the verb *ṭabbaq*, when one covers one's head.

Some people come to the bath with a little henna with which to dye their white hair; some too, bring arsenic (*zarnīkh*) which they hand to the bathman to prepare for them and mix with another substance to remove their pubic hair, while others call in the barber (*ḥallāq*) to the bath to shave the hair of their heads. There are persons who are accustomed daily to make use of the bath after lunch to arouse their thirst to use *qāt*,[63] and some use it when they have not had a walk before lunch, for the same purpose. This sort of bath is called *'arqat al-ḥammām* (the bath sweat).[59] When a number of those persons gathers together in the bath, especially if they be of the inhabitants of Ṣan'ā', they dance a quick dance to the tune of the *washwashah*[64] or else it is accompanied by some songs (*aghānī*) when there are persons there good at reciting them. Some too, go to the bath after chewing *qāt* when they have drunk an excessive amount of water[65] and want to turn it into perspiration, so as to rid themselves of it.

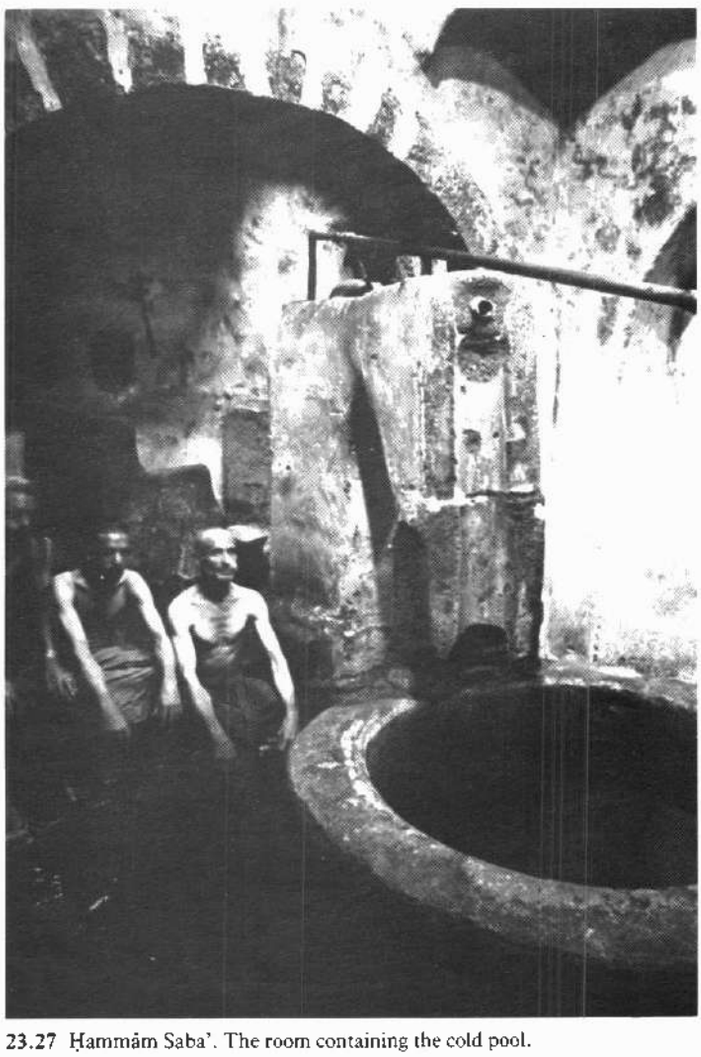
The tribes also make use of the bath, but they use it only for treatment of, either, cold which has affected one of their members, or rheumatism (*riyāḥ*) and so on.

Women's Customs at the Bath

Women go to the bath at purification after menstruation—this is *de rigueur*, but they may also go to the bath though there be no need for them to do so, for cleanliness only. It is a women's custom that all the women of one household generally go (together) to the bath, taking clean clothing with them along with the utensils of the bath, consisting of a scoop (*maghraf*), bucket (*bāldī/bārdī*),[66] soap, *līfah* and bath-bag (*kīs al-ḥammām*). In the past women used to take hair-earth (*turāb rūs*)[67] with them, i.e., sticky white dust, to wash their hair, before applying soap, so as to remove the engrained dirt (*bukhār*, pl., *abkhirah*) at the roots of the hair of the head, it being known as *jahrah*, but nowadays women use medical preparations to cleanse the hair.



23.26 Ḥammām Saba'. A view of the domes of the bath, from above. In the foreground is the well. A donkey carrying dried human excrement for fuel is on its way to the furnace room which is reached from roof level.



23.27 Ḥammām Saba'. The room containing the cold pool.

61 Coffee brings out the sweat.

62 A *shāl*, pl., *shīlān*, is usually of the Kashmiri type.

63 There is a fairly widespread view that a bath between lunch and the *qāt* session both makes the *qāt* taste nicer and increases one's capacity for chewing *qāt*. It is however doubtful if anyone goes to the public bath solely to improve the effect of *qāt*.

64 The *washwashah* is a 'shushing' sound made with the mouth. The *ḥanḥanah* song is also sung.

The dancing is purely and simply to work up a good sweat and old and young take part. Qāḍī Ismā'īl mentioned as possible dances the *da'sah, bar'ah* and *hawshariyyah*. The last word is no doubt equivalent to *hawshaliyyah*, meaning chaos (*fawḍā*) as in al-Khafanjī's poem in *Masājid Ṣan'ā'*, 71. Tribes dancing to the drum alone have each their own style of *bar'ah*, and at a gathering each tribe in turn will perform its own *bar'ah* with daggers (Yāfi'is perform it with swords). Then at the end it will be said, *'Al-ān hawshaliyyah—qad hi hawshaliyyah—bar'ah hawshaliyyah*, Now it's free for all, a general dance.' Each will then dance his own tribal *bar'ah* at the same time as the rest—and hence the sense of 'confusion' enters. Only the *raqṣ* has the pipe (*mizmār*) accompanying it.

65 As much water is drunk with *qāt* they have a sensation of heaviness (*thiqal*) in the belly.

66 Instead of a bucket women may take a *ṣafīḥah*, a flat bowl, with them. *Bardī*, an iron bucket, is a Dhamār pronunciation.

67 *Turāb rūs/jahrah* comes from the mountains but is, or was, sold in the towns.

Some women used to go naked[68] into the bath, but this is not reckoned nowadays to be a very widespread custom. It is a custom of some of the houses of Ṣan'ā' to get in touch with the bath-woman so as to get a tank to themselves (*li-yukhlā lahunna ḥawḍ*) in return for fixed fees, so that, when they come to the bath the tank is ready for them, without anyone sharing in it with them except when they have bathed and left the bath.

Al-Khulwah

Al-khulwah[69] is the clearing (*ikhlā'*) of the bath for an hour or two for persons who ask for this in return for a fixed sum of money—in the past it was two *riyāls* an hour, but now it goes up to fifty *riyāls*, and may even go up to as much as a hundred *riyāls* if the person to whom the bath is exclusively let (*al-mustakhlī lahu*) is obviously wealthy and well known. The bath is let exclusively to the bridegroom (*ḥarīw*) and the bride (*ḥarīwah*). The bridegroom's people ask the bathman to clear the bath for an hour or two so that the groom can go to it, accompanied by his party (*zumrah*), friends and relations, to take the bath, this happening before sunset up to the time of evening, or after the evening. When he goes to the bath a member of the family will already have received the key from the bathman and be waiting for him at the door in order to open it when the bridegroom arrives. When he does enter the door painted eggs are broken—as he enters and as he leaves. The bridegroom goes to the bath on the night of the procession (*laylat al-julwah,*[70] i.e. *al-zifāf*).

Similarly the bath is given over exclusively (*yakhtalī*) to the bride two or three days before the procession (*zifāf*). The women of the family and her friends accompany her, and they may also invite some of the women of the bridegroom's house. Decorated eggs are broken for her at her entry and on her leaving, for protection against Satan the Accursed. The henna-ing (*naqsh*)[71] of the bride by the tire-woman (*muzayyinah*) takes place at her house after the bath.

* * *

The popular belief that the bath is inhabited by jinn, so universal in the Arab world, still prevails in Ṣan'ā', although the young tend to pooh-pooh the idea and to blame women and old folk for its continued survival. Yet, notwithstanding this, people entering the bath commonly utter the following precautionary phrases, '*A'ūdhu bi-'llāh min al-Shayṭān al-Rajīm,* I take refuge in God from Satan the Accursed.' '*Ṣarraf Allāh bi-'l-Shayāṭīn,* May God avert the Satans.' It is clearly for like reasons that the eggs are broken at the main entrance to the bath just after the door with the words, '*Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm,* In the name of God the Compassionate the Merciful,' and '*A'ūdhu bi-'llāh min al-Shayṭān al-Rajīm,*' etc. This is done by a member of the family or a servant—no special person. The eggs, no specific number, are carried in a vessel of soft earth usually intended for holding candles; they are dyed red and green with the plants *shadhāb/shumār* and *lizāb*—in Ibb with *'uzzāb* which appears to have the property of averting the evil eye (*yiṣarrif al-'ayn*) and *dihn,* fresh butter.

Ownership, Management and Maintenance

Thirteen of the baths belong to the Waqf, three to the Government ('Alī, Makhlafah, and al-'Urḍī), and one (al-Hamdānī) is privately owned. The *ḥammāmī,* who would himself make between 50 and 150 *riyāls* a day, pays the Waqf or the Government about 100 *riyāls* a month, usually at a fixed rate. He must meet all the costs—labour, providing fuel, water and electricity. He pays no taxes on the baths, nor does he contribute to any night watch in his quarter. He usually collects the money from customers personally. The external maintenance of the bath must be done by the Waqf or the Government, unless privately owned. But all internal improvements or maintenance are done at the expense of the *ḥammāmī.* The hot rooms are replastered every year.

The baths used to be inspected by the Headman of the Bathmen ('āqil al-ḥammāmiyyīn) whose office also entailed giving decisions on any dispute between two *ḥammāmīs.* Now they are inspected four to five times a year by the Health Department, but no one was certain as to when this started.

The *Ḥammāmī* and his Employees

The *ḥammāmī* is of extremely low social status, and belongs to the group of occupations coming under the title of Bani 'l-Khums. All professions involving the service of bodies of others are demeaning, but since the *ḥammāmīs* used to collect human excrement before the Jews were set to this work doubtless this in itself was more than sufficient to relegate them to the lowest level. Qāḍī Ismā'īl's proverb underlines the fact: '*Qafr daymah wa-lā ḥammām 'abd,* A (traveller's) hut in deserted country rather than the bath of a slave.' Nevertheless the *ḥammāmī* makes a lot of money. Manzoni and Nazīh also call the bath proprietor *mu'allim* and the term is still often used today. All *ḥammāmīs* questioned claimed that the bath had been in the hands of their family for as long as they had any knowledge. On more than one occasion the son of the *ḥammāmī,* who would eventually succeed his father, was pointed out, and was seen to be working as a *mukayyis.*

All social classes are permitted to make use of the bath, even the low Akhdām class employed as sweepers, but their introduction to Ṣan'ā' from the Tihāmah has only taken place since 1962, or so it is said. On the other hand it appears that the Jews were debarred from using the baths of the Muslims, but had special baths of their own.

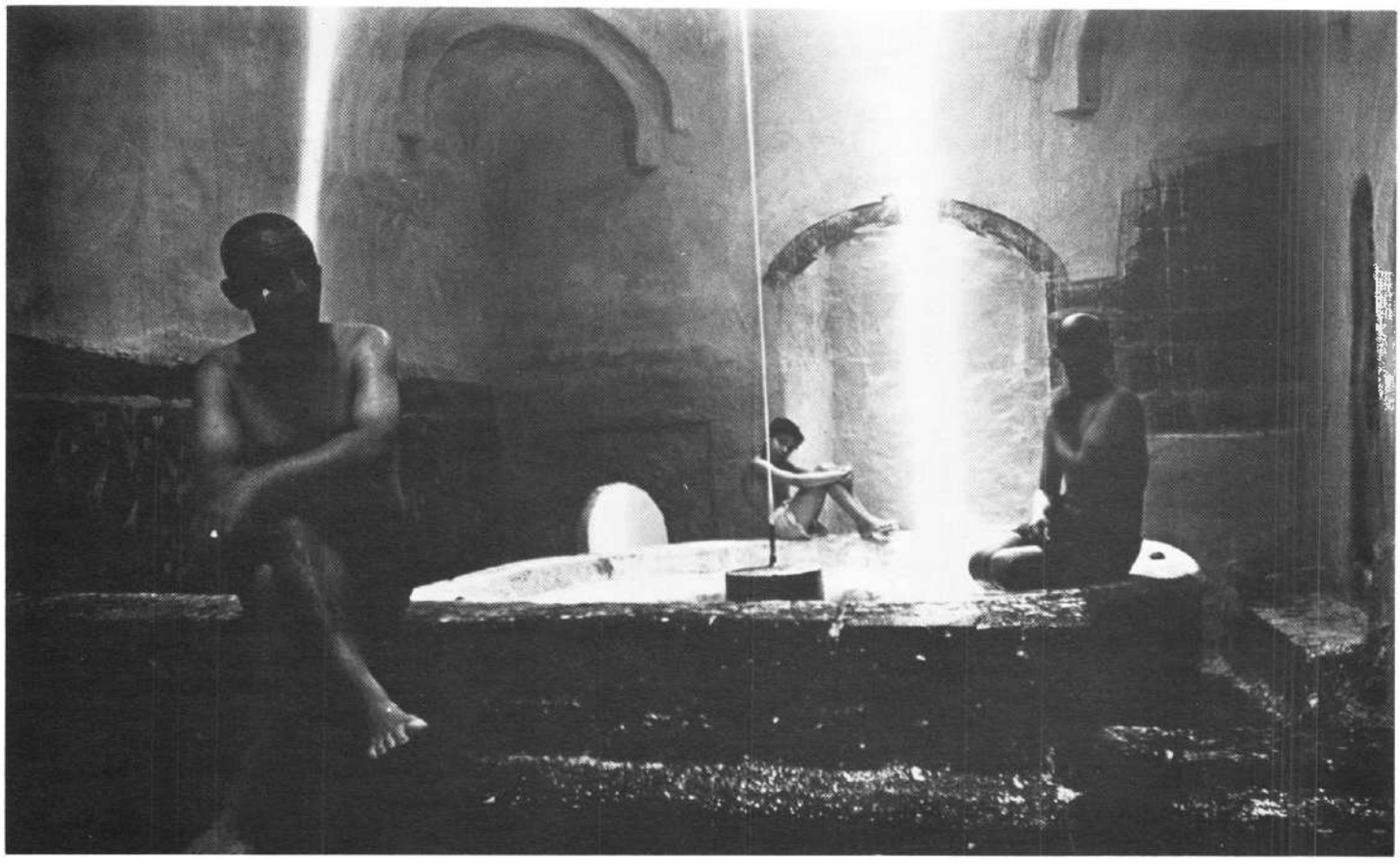
The *ḥammāmī* employs a number of *mukayyisīn* (masseurs, those who use the rough glove, *kīs*). The number employed varies according to the size of the bath and the amount of custom involved, Thursdays and Fridays demanding the maximum, the average on those days being four or five in most of the baths; on other days only one or two are employed. These are, on men's days, young men or boys, the *ḥammāmī's* sons, for obvious family

68 Women also wear a *fūṭah* only, but they consider exposure of the body permitted (*mubāḥ*) among themselves though this is contrary to the *shari'ah.* Lane (loc. cit.) says that in Cairo many women of the lower orders wear no clothes whatsoever in the bath. Turkish women in hirsute detail are portrayed so at the bath in Fehmi Edhem and Ivan Stchoukine, *Les manuscrits orientaux illustrés de la Bibliothèque de l'Université de Stamboul,* Paris, 1933, fig. 21.

69 You can book the entire bath or the tank (*ḥawḍ*) only.'*Akhtali 'l-ḥammām,* I book the bath.' Lane, op. cit., 349-54, alludes to *khilwah,* booking the whole bath for a marriage.

70 That is the night of the procession of the bride to the house of the groom. *Julwah* means *wuḍūḥ,* appearance, revealing.

71 Rossi, *L'Arabo parlato,* 96, provides an Arabic description of the *ḥammām wa-naqsh,* bath and decoration of the bride, which is not repeated here.



23.28 Ḥammām al-Sulṭān. A view from the changing room to the entrance to the hot rooms with the cold pool room in the centre. Thin shafts of sunlight from above blend with thin jets of water from below.

reasons, and others who sometimes work, on a part-time basis in afternoons, evenings or holidays. On women's days the *ḥammāmī's* wife employs her own daughters or relatives on the same basis when she can. Female bathers wash themselves.

The attendants are paid either directly by the customer, or by the *ḥammāmī* when the customer has paid an inclusive charge. They might make between 30 to 40 *riyāls* on a reasonable day.

The work period does not often exceed eight hours per day. Usually at least one of them sleeps in the bath.

Beside the *mukayyisīn* there are other attendants:

The *shāqi 'l-bārid* is responsible for keeping an adequate supply of cold water in the cistern, drawing it from the well. He would be tipped by the customers and his money is made up to about 15 to 20 *riyāls* per day by the *ḥammāmī*.

The *mūqidī* or stoker is responsible for the fire. He is paid about 10 *riyāls* a day by the *ḥammāmī*.

The *shāqi 'l-ḥammām* circulates in the Quarter to bring in human excrement. He would set it out to dry and it is then taken by the *mūqidī* to stoke up the furnace. He is paid by the *ḥammāmī* at a rate of about 1/2 *riyāl* per load. The donkey he uses belongs to the *ḥammāmī*. He does not remove the ashes taken out of the fire by the *mūqidī*. In the case of some baths this is now done by the Municipality (Baladiyyah).[72]

The rates of pay relate to the period before the high inflation (*ghalā'*) and apply to not later than 1975.

Origin and Development

According to popular belief Ḥammām Yāsir is the oldest bath and is at least a thousand years old. Ḥammām Shukr rates next, with its age given at between eight hundred and six hundred years. These dates must be treated with caution as we have so far discovered no historical evidence to confirm them. After that a large number of the baths is said to be four hundred years old.

Ḥammām al-Maydān is known to have been built at the same time as the Bakīriyyah Mosque, that is, in 1598 A.D.,[73] and there is nothing in its construction to conflict with this date.

This gives us a firm datum, and allows us to conclude that, both in style and construction and planning, some of the baths are likely to be considerably earlier. It is interesting to notice that though the first two changing rooms of Ḥammām al-Maydān are quite close to the Ottoman baths in Damascus in design and character, the back area of hot and temperate rooms is completely different, conforming in Ṣan'ā' to the Ṣan'ā' tradition, which was obviously firmly established by this date.

According to al-Ḥajarī,[74] Ḥammām al-Ṭawāshī was founded in 1028/1641.

Ḥammām Sūq al-Baqar (Maḥmūd) shows some internal evidence of relatively early date—for instance it does not have a central round or square pool in the intermediate space, and it has only two hot rooms and two temperate rooms instead of the

72 The above list of employees may be compared with M. 'Abdul Jabbār Beg, op. cit., *ṣāḥib al-ṣundūq* treasurer, *qayyim* lessee of the bath, *waqqād* stoker, *ṣabbāl* supplier of dung fuel, *muzayyin* barber, *ḥajjām* cupper. The *Encyl. Islam* (2nd ed.) says that in the 4th/10th century Damascus baths had the *qayyim* lessee, *kayyās/mukayyis* masseur, and at later periods the word *dallāk* would be used in some places.

In Ṣan'ā' the *muzayyins* used also to circumcise (*yuṭahhirūn*) not of course at the Bath. Bayt Barqūq is a *muzayyin* family of Ṣan'ā' which did this.

73 *Masājid Ṣan'ā'*, 17.

74 Ibid, 69.

groups of three found in Ḥammāms al-Maydān and al-Ṭawāshī.

If we now group together the baths which we believe likely to be earlier than the first Ottoman occupation of the Yemen, that is, Ḥammāms Sūq al-Baqar, Yāsir and Shukr, we find that all three have no central pool in the intermediate space. They are relatively small, compared with most of the other baths, and they have no *dīwān* off the intermediate space. Ḥammāms al-Bawniyah, al-Sulṭān, al-Mutawakkil and al-Ṭawāshī, all have the latter room, facing a central pool with a fountain. In this conjunction of features they seem to relate to a precedent established by the Ottomans. Other baths, such as Saba', have the central pool without the *dīwān,* so that, following this reasoning, they were either altered or entirely built since Ottoman times.

Assuming then that we have, in Ḥammāms Sūq al-Baqar, Yāsir and Shukr, three baths earlier than the 9th/16th century, and that they represent a tradition of grouping four, or, more usually, six small rooms together for the hot and temperate rooms of the bath, how early are public baths likely to have been in Ṣan'ā'?

There are several pieces of evidence in answer to this question. The first comes from the historians. Al-Rāzī for instance, as seen above, tells us that in 353/964 there were 13 baths (*ḥammām*) in Ṣan'ā'. In the same passage he says that there were 106 mosques in Ṣan'ā'—which is quite close to the present figure.

The other piece of evidence is the design of the baths with their clusters of small rooms. Such a bath design is quite unlike that of the baths of Cairo (e.g., Ḥammām Bashtāk, dating from the 8th/14th century). Not only does the latter lack the grouping of small rooms, but the furnace is at roof level, not underneath, and the heating is effected by circulating hot water and dropping it down into the pool from a height so that steam forms in the air of the bath.[75] Nor are the Ṣan'ā' baths like those of Turkey, which are characterized by grouping all the small hot rooms around a central cruciform or polygonal space. Finally, they do not appear to resemble baths of an early period in Iraq or Iran, although relatively little has been discovered and published about the design of these.

There is, however, one type of bath that the Ṣan'ā' baths do resemble fairly closely. This is the type built during the late Roman Empire in Libya and northern Egypt (Leptis Magna and Alexandria).[76] These baths have a number of features in common with those of Ṣan'ā', particularly their method of heating and the lay-out of their rooms. The Roman baths used the hypocaust method of heating the floor of the hot rooms, with flues passing up the walls, the practice still followed in the Yemen. Like the Ṣan'ā' baths, those of Roman North Africa had two or three rooms for the hot zone (*calidarium*) and two or three for the temperate zone, suggesting that a link may have existed between the architecture of the two areas during an early period.

Finally, there is one early Damascus bath with a closely related plan, Ḥammām al-Sulṭān, built in 684/1298, which alone among sixty baths in the city resembles the Ṣan'ā' type.[77] It has been conjectured that it may be derived from Persia or Iraq, but perhaps it may not be too much to suppose that its design was taken to Syria from the Yemen?

Postscript:

As a caution to those who might leave the bath too precipitously, let the would-be bather take heed of the unhappy consequences which befell the two brothers Ibrāhīm and Dāwūd b. 'Abdullāh, Amīrs at Ṣan'ā', as chronicled by the *Ghāyat al-amānī,*[78] under the annals for the year 747/1346-7. 'They continued governing Ṣan'ā' until the weavers (*al-ḥawak*) in it rose and entered the Qaṣr while the two Amīrs were in the bath (*ḥammām*). They were brought their breast-plates which they put on, and came out of the bath. The people rallied to them and some of the weavers they slew and others they took captive. Amīr Dāwūd was seized by a partial paralysis because of putting on the breastplate after the bath!'

75 Similarly, the method of use differs in many important particulars; for example, towels are dried in Egyptian baths in specially constructed high ceilings in the changing rooms.

76 J. B. Ward Perkins, J. M. C. Toynbee and R. Fraser, *The hunting baths at Leptis Magna,* Oxford, 1949.

77 Additional references to baths are *A'immat al-Yaman,* I, 79, Ta'izz; II, 381, Dhī Sufāl in 587/1191; *Nashr al-'arf,* II, 454, al-Khaḍrā' of Radā' loses its inhabitants and its *ḥammām* is ruined (after 1111/1699-1700); ibid, I, 222, Ta'izz has two baths, one for men, the other for women. M. Ecochard and C. le Coeur, *Les bains de Damas*, Beirut, 1942-3, 51-7, 130; M. J. Sauvaget, 'Un bain damasquin du xiiième siècle', *Syria*, Paris, 1930, 370-80; Munīr Kayyāl, *al-Ḥammāmāt al-Dimashqiyyah wa-taqādidu-hā,* Damascus, 1966, with interesting sociological data useful for comparison; Ambrosiana Ms. in the Löfgren-Traini catalogue, 161, no. ccxciv, Aḥmad b. al-'Imād al-Aqfahsī, *al-Qawl al-tāmm fī ādāb dukhūl al-ḥammām,* the author being a Cairo Shāfi'ī (ob. 808/1405-6). There is actually a form of document for the purchase of a *ḥammām*, with some architectural detail, in a 3rd-4th century H. author—see Jeanette K. Wakin, *The function of documents in Islamic law (The chapters on sales from Ṭaḥāwī's K. al-Shurūṭ al-kabīr*), Albany, N.Y., 1972, 101-99.

78 Op. cit., 514.